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25 November 2011

Miss P Adams
Headteacher
Victoria Avenue Community Primary School
Victoria Avenue
Blackley
Manchester
M9 0RD

Dear Miss Adams

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Victoria Avenue Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 and 24 November 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Strategic Director of Children's Services for Manchester.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2010

- Raise pupils' attainment, improve achievement and behaviour and eradicate inadequate teaching by:
 - developing consistent and effective classroom and behaviour management procedures
 - ensuring teachers are secure in the assessment of pupils' learning
 - ensuring teachers plan lessons which meet and challenge the individual learning needs and interests of all groups and especially boys
 - ensuring marking consistently helps pupils to improve their work
 - providing pupils with opportunities to develop respect for others through meeting pupils from different religions and cultures to their own, or by studying them
 - further improve attendance.

- Improve the quality of the curriculum by:
 - ensuring the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum meets the needs of children of this age and, in particular, boys
 - providing pupils in Years 1 to 6 with the challenging and interesting opportunities they need in order to become more motivated by and involved in learning
 - improving the quality of resources and teaching materials in order to engage pupils more effectively.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of leaders in evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - providing targeted and appropriate training and support for all staff
 - developing educational partnerships which secure sustainable improvements to pupils' welfare and safety.

- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:
 - ensuring governors fulfil their statutory duties, especially in relations to safeguarding requirements
 - ensuring governors receive appropriate training in order to fulfil their roles.

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Victoria Avenue Community Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 November 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, middle leaders, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, one of the executive headteachers has continued to lead the school supported by an acting deputy headteacher and four assistant headteachers. Two teachers have left the school and four teachers have been appointed on temporary fixed-term contracts. Part-time teaching assistants have been replaced by four full-time members of staff. A temporary leader to the Early Years Foundation Stage and a part-time administrator have been appointed. The school continues to move towards academy status for January 2012.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Results of the national assessments and tests in 2011 indicate that attainment at the end of Year 2 remains low, although some improvements can be seen in reading and mathematics. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved in all areas from 2010 with boys performing better than girls. Progress made by pupils overall remains low. However, the progress made by pupils in mathematics has improved considerably with almost all the pupils making the progress expected of them. Current data held by the school show an improving picture. There is evidence to show better progress, with more pupils being on track to reach age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Since the last monitoring inspection, most progress can be seen in Year 2. In this year group, accelerated progress can be seen for many pupils. Minimal improvements can be seen in the numbers of pupils achieving the higher levels across the school, although better progress by the more able pupils is evident in Year 5.

Groups are now tracked well and vulnerable groups have been identified and their progress is being monitored. This has ensured all teachers and leaders hold a better view of attainment and progress and are able to intervene at an earlier stage where necessary. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are making better progress and their attainment is quickly catching up with that of their peers. More targeted interventions have been implemented, which provide pupils requiring support the much-needed help. New resource areas have been set up where pupils learn on a one-to-one basis in a stimulating

and supportive environment. As this work is in its infancy, it is difficult to monitor its effectiveness.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise attainment and improve achievement – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Generally behaviour has improved and most pupils are polite and courteous. A more consistent approach to the monitoring of poor behaviour has been applied with systematic records maintained by almost all staff. Disruptive behaviour by pupils has decreased. In the few lessons observed during the inspection where teachers' expectations were not high enough, behaviour of some pupils slipped. There is evidence to show some improvements in rates of attendance from the previous year. The school tracks attendance and works in close liaison with the local authority. Poor attendance is challenged. The new Friday attendance assemblies reward and encourage pupils to attend school regularly.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve behaviour by developing consistent and effective classroom and behaviour management procedures – satisfactory
- improve attendance – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

Rigorous monitoring by senior leaders and the local authority shows an improving picture of teaching and learning. Inconsistencies continue to be eradicated through the implementation of coaching techniques. Improved systems to track and monitor the progress made by all pupils and groups are leading to a greater understanding of what pupils need to achieve next. However, there remains variation in the delivery of lessons and activities are not always pitched at an appropriate level. Where this is the case, learning and progress slow. In the more effective lessons, teachers use the learning challenges, curriculum targets and success criteria to move pupils on in their learning and high expectations prevail. However, this is not seen across all classes and is not used effectively by all teachers. A marking policy is now in place, although not consistently adhered to by all teachers, with variation across subjects and classes. The planning of lessons is improving, which generally results in better deployment of adults. However, evidence suggests that teachers' planning does not always translate into effective classroom activity. Pupils are more familiar with assessing their own work, which can be seen in pupils' books and in lessons.

The focus on improving the curriculum through speaking and listening and drama-based activities continues, although leaders are very aware of the necessity to prioritise the development of pupils' basic skills. The impact of this approach has been monitored. Plans are developing to introduce a more skills-based curriculum, although this has not been implemented for all subjects. Staff are undergoing training to support this work and are

beginning to develop curriculum overviews. The school's leaders acknowledge that breadth and balance must be ensured and curriculum days have been planned to ensure pupils' entitlement is met. The way in which topic work is recorded remains underdeveloped with minimal evidence in some pupils' books. This has not been monitored by senior leaders.

Developing the Early Years Foundation Stage has been a priority for the leaders of the school and improvements can be seen. More purposeful activities have been introduced and a focus on writing and mark making is clearly evident. Links with parents and carers have improved and they are encouraged to bring their child into the classrooms and get actively involved in 'writing challenges' to begin the school day. A new leader is supporting the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage which is bringing a more unified and consistent approach. Strengths and areas to develop have been identified and progress of all children is now monitored. The indoor environment has been improved and the outdoor learning area continues to be a focus for the school. Learning outside is more purposeful, but some opportunities are still missed to extend the children's learning. The recording of children's achievements is more accurate, but still remains inconsistent across the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and the assessment of pupils' learning – satisfactory
- improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory
- improve the quality of the curriculum in Years 1 – 6 – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

A newly established and extended leadership team is tackling issues and focusing on the priorities which will lead to the necessary changes. Through professional development, some middle leaders are becoming more empowered and hold a better understanding of what needs to be done to improve outcomes for pupils at Victoria Avenue School. Tracking procedures are much improved, leading to greater analysis of attainment and progress for all pupils and groups. This rigorous approach is effective in ensuring all staff are aware of pupil achievement. Furthermore, teachers are now more accountable and make suggestions on how they will improve rates of progress for pupils in their class. Pupil progress meetings are now established where teachers discuss attainment and progress with senior leaders. This information is becoming more closely linked to the implementation of intervention programmes and the deployment of additional adults. While senior leaders are tackling underachievement, more still needs to be done to ensure all pupils achieve their full potential.

Training has been delivered to the governing body. This is better enabling members to hold the school's leaders to account for their actions. A new system linking key areas for improvement to a member of the governing body and a senior leader is a positive development. The findings of which are formally reported to the full governing body. The welfare and safeguarding requirements are a priority for the school. However, the

monitoring of school procedures is not rigorous enough. Training for the safeguarding of pupils has been recently provided for staff and a named governor.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory
- improve the effectiveness of the governing body – satisfactory
- improve the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures – satisfactory

External support

The local authority continues to support the school. Regular reviews are held to monitor the school's progress against key areas for improvement. Local authority personnel have worked alongside the governing body, have supported the development of the leadership in the school and attended regular meetings. The local authority has provided satisfactory support.