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5 March 2010

Sue Dixon  
Headteacher  
Yarnfield Primary School  
Yarnfield Road  
Tyseley  
Birmingham  
B11 3PJ

Dear Miss Dixon,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Yarnfield Primary School

Following my visit with Dr Anna Coyle Additional Inspector to your school on 3 and 4 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate.

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 governors and the Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Yarnfield Primary School.

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 3-4 March 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, and observed 32 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, two deputy headteachers and the assistant headteacher, phase leaders, the same group of parents as at the last visit to gauge their perceptions of the progress the school had made, the chair of governors, and the school improvement partner. As part of the visit, the school's procedures for the safeguarding of pupils were again checked and minor omissions were asked to be remedied in time for the next monitoring visit.

## Context

There have not been as many staffing changes since the last visit. Four staff have left to pursue other careers and four new staff have been appointed. Two teachers have moved to teach a different year group within the school. There have been no changes to teaching staff in the Nursery or in Year 6. An assistant headteacher with the responsibility for inclusion has been appointed and took up post in January 2010. More teaching assistants have been appointed to support teachers and work with identified groups in the classroom. There is still some, although vastly reduced, use of agency staff to cover for teacher illness. Pupil numbers remain consistent as at the last visit. The technical building issue concerning the covered area for the youngest children has still not been addressed effectively.

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

As at the last visit, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science remain well below the national average throughout the school. Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and inadequate progress in Key Stage 2. However, the 2009 Year 6 test results did improve on previous years. There is clear evidence that the gap between the school and national figures is slowly closing. Attainment in mathematics, the weakest area, made some improvement from a very low base line, although still remains much weaker than English despite the school's efforts. Improvement is also evident by the end of Key Stage 1 in Year 2, where for the first time, pupils in the 2009 teacher assessments attained broadly national averages. Reading is the strongest area, writing has become the weakest area, and mathematics is improving albeit at a slow and steady rate.

The school's improved data analysis shows that current achievement and progress of pupils remain too inconsistent both within year groups, across the school, and by certain groups of pupils, especially in mathematics. This was confirmed by lesson

observations. White British and Bangladeshi pupils consistently make slower progress throughout the school, although the small numbers of Black African, Black Caribbean and pupils with special educational needs who have a statement make better progress. The large number of Pakistani pupils perform better in Key Stage 1 than they do in Key Stage 2.

The teaching of mental mathematics still remains inconsistent across the school. The strategy of the daily afternoon session is of variable quality and effectiveness. However, in the sessions observed, some pupils are becoming more confident in their use of number and are beginning to enjoy the mental maths sessions more, especially where there is a brisk and energetic pace to teacher questioning. Weaker sessions are more like mathematics lessons and overuse is made of undifferentiated worksheets. Mathematics training opportunities provided for the staff, especially those provided by the local authority (LA) with a practical focus, have resulted in a wider range of activities now being provided in the classroom.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards by ensuring that work set in all lessons is appropriately challenging for all pupils – inadequate
- Strengthen provision in mathematics so that pupils develop number skills and carry out calculations quickly and efficiently - inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The behaviour of the pupils remains good as at the last visit although attendance has not yet started to improve. The 93.6% attendance rate reported on the last visit has reduced to 92.8% and is still below the national average. The school has recorded attendance some weeks above the national average, but is unable to sustain high attendance levels. Strategies to convince parents not to take their children on holiday in term time have had some but not enough impact and there remains work to do to improve attendance. There has been one fixed term exclusion since the last visit.

The effectiveness of provision

Senior staff and phase leaders have continued to work closely with the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and learning judged inadequate overall at the last inspection. Progress with improving the quality of teaching is too slow. All teachers were observed with senior staff of the school as part of this monitoring visit and observations concluded that the overall quality of teaching whilst slightly better, has not improved enough since the last visit. However, staff are working very hard and there is a growing sense of better staff morale and more evidence of consistency across the school. One parent commented, 'staff are working much more as a team now and this has a calming effect on the children'. There is more

consistency in other areas too, now that whole school policies such as the marking of pupils' work, especially in English are being followed. Staff have tackled the marking of pupils' work in mathematics, but still find it difficult to offer points for improvement. They are more confident to mark and provide points for improvement in English where they have achieved more success. Marking in mathematics remains inconsistent.

At the last visit, lesson planning was judged to be over-complex and this is still the case. Attempts to simplify teachers' plans have had mixed results in that they do not always identify clearly enough what the pupils are expected to learn in lessons. Thirty two lessons were observed during this visit, and planning and the clarity of learning objectives are still inconsistent. The monitoring records of the senior staff and phase leaders demonstrate that the quality of teaching is improving with fewer lessons judged to be inadequate. Inspectors agree, although the pace of improvement is too slow. In the lessons observed during this visit, strengths and areas for development still remain in the overall quality of teaching. Inconsistencies have not been fully resolved. Strengths include: the good behaviour of the children and the relationships they have with their teachers; the high expectations teachers have of the pupils; teachers' good subject knowledge; the use of good probing and challenging questioning; work is appropriately challenging for different groups of pupils in the class, and good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn independently. However, too many lessons had weaker features and issues observed at the last visit remain such as: teachers talk too much; the pace of learning is too slow; there is insufficient variety in the lesson activities; and not enough pupils are challenged to answer questions in class. Where staffing has remained constant, for example in the Nursery and in Year 6, the quality of teaching is better, attainment is higher and pupil progress quicker.

The use of data to monitor pupil progress has a much higher profile throughout the school now and is more widely used by class teachers and senior staff to set targets and monitor progress. However, in too many lessons observed, there remains a lack of sufficient challenge for all pupils. In some lessons, tasks are appropriately planned for different groups of pupils, but in others, tasks are insufficiently differentiated to ensure that all abilities are appropriately challenged, especially the most able.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring lessons are purposeful and that marking informs pupils what they have done well and exactly what they need to do to improve further – inadequate
- Ensure that targets are consistently challenging for all pupils - inadequate

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The staffing issues identified at the last visit remain an issue for the school although not to the same extent. Fewer agency staff are used now. Senior managers have made efforts to ensure that the impact of staff changes on pupil progress is minimised, such as staff staying with their class for consecutive years, or moving staff to teach other groups in the school to improve the consistency of teaching within year groups. Agency staff are still used frequently in the school, although pupils are getting to know regular supply staff and progress is more consistent.

Improved senior staff and phase leader monitoring strategies are providing a more accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Regular and more accurate use of data is now able to assess pupil progress and set more challenging targets. As a result, actions are beginning to be more accurate and better targeted at improving pupil outcomes and raising standards. Pupil progress meetings involving the class teacher and senior staff are ensuring a consistent approach to the assessment of pupil progress (APP) and teachers are held more to account for the progress their children are making. Predictions for test results in 2010 expect broadly similar outcomes to the 2009 results for Key Stage 1 and slightly better outcomes for Key Stage 2. A larger number of pupils and groups of pupils will require additional support if the school is to improve significantly on its 2009 test results. Additional teaching assistants have now been appointed and they are now better deployed to support pupils who require specific intervention.

The improvement plan produced by the school and the local authority (LA) since the last visit is inadequate and does not provide a suitably useful tool for school improvement. The plan took too long to complete and insufficient collaboration with the LA has resulted in missed opportunities to move the school forward at a quicker pace. Stated actions are not consistently sharp or measurable enough, so the school is currently unable to sufficiently measure the impact of its actions. The evaluation of the effectiveness of management actions is weak and is often reported as actions that have been completed. As a result, it is not incisive enough to inform future actions. The plan is however, enabling the school to make better decisions about the support required from the LA.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that leaders and managers monitor provision and pupils' progress rigorously so that progress is consistent across the school – satisfactory

### External support

There has been variable support from the local authority since the last visit for the senior staff and for aspects of literacy and numeracy. Teachers valued the practical mathematics training they received and also training for supporting gifted and talented pupils. The majority of external support has been valued by teachers and senior managers, with some support being more effective than others. For example

there was insufficient collaboration during the formulation of the single school improvement plan, an issue identified at the last visit. Unfortunately, the local authority has been unable to provide an advanced skills teacher to support mathematics, a key area of development for the school. The school improvement partner has been a supportive visitor in the school especially with Year 5 and 6. Other senior LA staff have provided good challenging support for the senior team. LA monitoring reports have been accurate and useful to the school in identifying areas of concern and suggesting possible ways forward.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- eradicate inadequate teaching by:
  - ensuring that all lessons have clear and measurable learning objectives,
  - ensuring that activities in lessons develop learning and are reviewed at the end of each lesson,
- ensure that the school improvement plan is written in collaboration with the LA and has sharp objectives so the school, LA and governors can measure the impact of their actions,
- work with the local authority and parents to improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils who take holidays in term time.