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13 October 2010

Mrs C Heeks
Acting Headteacher
Cippenham Primary School
Elmshott Lane
Cippenham
Slough
Berkshire
SL1 5RB

Dear Mrs Heeks

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Cippenham Primary School

Following my visit with Jane Neech HMI to your school on 5 and 6 October 2010, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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.

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 Director of Children's Services for Slough.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly increase the rate of progress in English and mathematics for pupils from all groups by:
 - ensuring that pupils build progressively on their learning as they move through the school
 - setting targets based on pupils' individual attainment levels, and ensuring that pupils make progress towards these targets in each year group.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently at least satisfactory across the school by ensuring that teachers:
 - use day-to-day-assessment information to plan lessons that are sharply tailored to the needs of differing groups in their classes
 - use their time effectively in lessons to help differing groups of pupils move forwards in their learning
 - harness pupils' good personal development and ensure that they have challenging opportunities to be actively involved in learning and assessment.
- Improve systems for checking school effectiveness, planning for improvement and evaluating success by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders have a clear plan each term to show how they will secure improvement in pupils' attainment and progress across the school
 - analysing termly assessment information rigorously to determine how well all groups are making progress, so as to pinpoint where pupils fall behind
 - carrying out regular and rigorous checks to ensure that the resulting actions taken by the leadership team result in improved outcomes for pupils, particularly in English and mathematics
 - providing accurate information for the governing body so that it can carry out its duties more effectively

- ensuring that longer-term plans for school improvement focus primarily on raising attainment and increasing pupils' rates of progress, particularly in English and mathematics.

Special measures: monitoring of Cippenham Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 October 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed 20 lessons or part sessions. They scrutinised school action plans, analysed national test results and looked at pupils' books. Inspectors met with senior staff, the new headteacher designate, governors, pupils and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection, the headteacher has retired and one of the deputy headteachers has been appointed temporarily as the acting headteacher. The headteacher designate takes up her position on 1 November 2010. Although there are nursery and infant schools adjoining this school, it has become a primary school to support the demand for a growing population in the Slough area. There are ongoing substantial building works to enable this site to accommodate two Reception classes for the Early Years Foundation Stage and two Key Stage 1 classrooms for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Not all pupils in these new classes come from the local Cippenham community. There has been a high staff turnover with 21 new staff joining the school at the start of the new academic year. The number on roll has risen from 475 to 547. There are four classes in each year group in Years 3 to 6. The last inspection report was based upon this school as a junior school and thus the issues identified for improvement relate to Years 3 to 6.

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

Data from the most recent national tests indicate that standards at the end of Year 6 remain broadly average, although improvements were made in the number of pupils achieving the higher levels. Given that the vast majority of these pupils started Year 3 with above average attainment in key skills, senior leaders confirm that progress in the past has been insufficient. However, by organising Years 4, 5 and 6 into specific ability groups for English and mathematics, where the needs of each individual are matched to the lesson content, pupil progress has started to improve. Information is used from assessment activities to ensure that the work planned challenges the pupils and moves them on in their learning. Those pupils who have been identified as underperforming are being supported well by individual programmes. For example, short daily sessions which focus on letter sounds have started to improve pupil confidence in reading. A consistent approach to setting targets for English and mathematics ensures that the pupils know what they have to do to improve their work. Older pupils are also clear about what level they are working at and are starting to have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve this. They are eager learners and keen to do well in their work. Parents comment on the

'new-found enthusiasm' within the school and are impressed because there is now 'a bit of a buzz'. For example, they consider that their children are much more interested in their homework which they feel is given out with improved consistency and has greater levels of challenge.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement (Years 3 to 6):

- Rapidly increase the rate of progress in English and mathematics for pupils from all groups – **satisfactory**.

Other pupil outcomes

Behaviour in school is consistently good and is often excellent. Pupils are extremely respectful of adults and, even when the pace of learning is slow and uninspiring, they sit quietly and calmly in class. They feel safe in school and are confident that they can approach an adult in school with a worry or concern. By keenly taking part in cycle training, pupils show how sensibly they consider their own safety. During residential trips to Swanage and the Isle of Wight they develop independent skills. Learning about the Second World War by using novels such as 'Goodnight Mr Tom' enables the pupils to have an empathy with their grandparents, many of whom were evacuated during the war. They show a good level of maturity when they compare their own beliefs and customs with each other. High levels of responsibility are displayed through involvement in a business enterprise project. For example, by devising ways to make an initial loan of £1 grow, they raised respectable sums of money for charity.

The effectiveness of provision

An improved understanding of how assessment is used to plan lessons that meet the needs of the pupils has resulted in better learning in Years 3 to 6. By sharing lesson objectives with the pupils, they know what they need to learn, and appropriate questioning by the teachers ensures that this is achieved. Working alongside their 'learning partners' is helping the pupils to become more involved in lessons and developing a greater awareness of how well they are doing. Focused work with specific groups is enabling the teachers to use their time more effectively during teaching sessions. For example, higher-attaining pupils are given appropriate challenge, while those who need further input to help them learn receive additional support. Classroom environments are vibrant, routines are consistent and good use is made of the display space to guide pupils in their learning. Most classes enjoy positive relationships with teaching staff who give pupils effective pastoral care and support. The adoption of a national programme of work and a reading scheme for English, coupled with a commercial mathematics scheme, has started to ensure that planning is consistent and skills are taught progressively as the pupils move through Years 3 to 6. These have been combined well with the creative provision which is a strong feature of the school. Nevertheless, at times there is still too much teacher

talk and some activities do not have sufficient focus on stretching the ability of the most able pupils. Although learning support staff work well with individual groups, their time is not always used well during whole-class introductory sessions or lesson conclusions. Pupils report that they would like to be trusted more with practical activities, for instance in science, and inspectors agree that there is still a need for greater pupil involvement in lessons.

In the very newly established Years 1 and 2, teacher knowledge and understanding of how younger pupils learn is inadequate. Lesson planning does not match the specific needs of the pupils and there is too much adult direction. For example, a large minority of these pupils are yet to develop age-related personal, social and emotional skills and a high number of them are still at the early stage of language acquisition. Yet, many of the activities planned depend on using skills that the pupils have still to develop. There are insufficient opportunities available for these youngsters to learn through play and, consequently, they are required to sit for inappropriately long periods of time.

In contrast there is a strong developing knowledge and understanding of the curriculum for the new Early Years Foundation Stage classes. The atmosphere is warm and inviting and the teaching is good. The indoor classroom is organised in an exciting and stimulating manner and key skills are introduced in a fun way. For instance, 'George', who is a friendly and helpful hand puppet, helps them understand new letters and sounds. Learning support assistants interact well with the children and support skill development through active talk and high levels of involvement. However, there is no outdoor learning area for these youngsters to access which means that the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage cannot be fully met.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas of improvement (Years 3 to 6):

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently at least satisfactory across the school – **satisfactory**.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher and her deputy headteacher have been key drivers in implementing an appropriate plan of action to improve the school. The impact of their work can be seen in the development of teaching techniques and the improvement of learning strategies in Years 3 to 6. There is a clear focus on improving the progress made by these pupils and this is evident in the developing use of data to inform how the ability groups are set up. Middle managers have established systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning in their specific subject areas and have an evolving understanding of assessing pupil progress. Governors appreciate the information that they now receive and this is helping them to accurately understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They know that they need to develop greater challenge in relation to evaluating provision

throughout a primary school and its impact on pupil progress. Parents are pleased with the improvements that have been introduced in recent months and in particular praise the communication links that have been forged between home and school. Nevertheless, the senior leadership team recognises that their focus to date has been Years 3 to 6. They understand that much needs to be done in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. They also recognise that the school has no experienced leader and manager for these key stages and that specialist support is needed urgently. At times, the presence of these two key stages in the school is marginalised by members of the school community who do not fully appreciate that these youngsters also have an equal entitlement to a fully inclusive life at school.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas of improvement (Years 3 to 6):

- Improve systems for checking school effectiveness, planning for improvement and evaluating success – **satisfactory**.

External support

The local authority statement of action meets the requirements. The acting headteacher has been well supported by a local advisory headteacher who has recently taken over the role as the School Improvement Partner. The local authority has supported the governors well in the appointment of the new headteacher. By deploying two headteachers onto the interview panel, governors were very well supported in their appointment. This ensured that an appropriate candidate with extensive experience of the full primary age range and a proven history of school improvement was appointed. Advisory support is also being provided for teaching staff in Years 3 to 6. However, the local authority recognises that there are key areas in Reception and in Years 1 and 2 that require urgent help and improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

As a matter of urgency:

- provide a safe, secure and discrete outdoor learning area for the Early Years Foundation Stage classes
- improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Key Stage 1 classes
- ensure that all children in the newly opened Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are fully included as members of the school community.