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23 March 2012

Mrs W Hyde
Headteacher
Pot Kiln Primary School
Butt Road
Great Cornard
Sudbury
CO10 0DS

Dear Mrs Hyde

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pot Kiln Primary School

Following my visit with Lynn Lowery, additional inspector, to your school on 21–22 March 2012, 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 October 2011. 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 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 Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2011

- Raise achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2, especially in writing and mathematics, so that most pupils meet the ambitious targets set for them in this year's improvement plans by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion of good or better teaching to at least 50% by 2012
 - sharing best practice, modelling good teaching and providing additional staff training in the teaching of writing and mathematics for those who need it most
 - embedding newly introduced procedures for assessing pupils' progress so that teachers and managers have an accurate overview of how well all pupils are achieving and are able to intervene early to provide additional support for those at risk of underachieving
 - improving the identification of, and guidance and support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and closely monitoring how effectively teachers use this information to narrow the gap between their attainment and that of similar pupils nationally by 2012.

- Improve the quality of the curriculum and its impact on outcomes for pupils by:
 - ensuring it is modified to meet the needs of pupils of different ages, abilities and interests and becomes firmly embedded by July 2012
 - mapping out where and when pupils' writing and numeracy skills will be taught, practised and improved across all subjects, and checking if they are delivered
 - providing more enrichment opportunities, including school visits, visitors and collaborative activities with other schools to stimulate pupils' creative writing
 - making more use of information and communication technology to enhance learning.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management to accelerate the rate of improvement and ensure that outcomes for pupils are significantly better in 2012 by:
 - engaging all leaders and managers, teachers, teaching assistants and the governing body, as a matter of urgency, in an accurate evaluation of the school and the actions needed to address its weaknesses
 - providing clear and coherent senior leadership so that all staff understand fully their roles and the expectations of them
 - increasing the frequency of lesson monitoring, the scrutiny of teachers' planning and marking, and checking of pupils' work

- ensuring all leaders of subjects and key stages make thorough use of assessment data, and are held fully accountable for the standards achieved in their area of responsibility
- reporting improvements made to the governing body as a standing agenda point in its meetings to enable it to provide further challenge for senior leaders and greater scrutiny of the school's overall performance.

Special measures: monitoring of Pot Kiln Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 21–22 March 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with teachers, managers, governors and a representative of the local authority. All classes were visited and most teachers observed.

Context

Two new teaching appointments have been made since the last inspection. The school is subject to the local authority's reorganisation from a three-tier to a two-system. As part of this, the current Year 4 will remain at the school at the end of this academic year to become the new Year 5.

Achievement of pupils at the school

No new national examination data has been published since the last inspection. As identified at that inspection, standards remain well below national averages both at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, there are encouraging early signs that progress and standards are beginning to rise. In Years 1 and 2, though standards are very low, the proportion of pupils attaining expected levels has shown an improving trend. This is most marked in mathematics in Year 1, and reading and writing in Year 2.

In class, inspectors confirmed that standards are low. In Years 3 and 4, however, progress accelerates and the gap between national average and the school's performance is closing. In reading and mathematics, it is closing quickly because the teaching in these areas is improving. Differences in the attainment of boys and girls remain, with girls performing better, especially in writing. The latest school data indicate that this gap is closing across all year groups, however. In Years 3 and 4, many pupils are coping well with knowledge and understanding that is appropriate for their age. A few are beyond age-related expectations, especially in mathematics.

As at the last inspection, progress made by the significant number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below national average. However the school's own data indicate that this is beginning to accelerate, especially in Years 3 and 4.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- raise achievement in Key Stages 1 and 2, especially in writing and mathematics, so that most pupils meet the ambitious targets set for them in this year's improvement plans – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

The school has eradicated inadequate teaching. A majority of teaching is satisfactory, with some that is good. The school is, rightly, putting much effort into the improvement of teaching and this is beginning to have an effect on learning in class. Professional development has been extensive, especially in the crucial area of assessment. Teachers now systematically evaluate the standards that pupils have attained and leaders and staff are beginning to use these data to monitor whole-school performance and set targets accordingly. Assessment is accurate at all levels in all years. Using these data has enabled teachers to set challenging targets for individuals and groups. Many pupils are aware of their next steps and what they need to do to improve. However, for a significant minority, this is not the case.

In the best classes, teachers have a good and clear understanding of the levels that pupils are at. In these classes, this information is used effectively to ensure that those with the lowest attainment learn the skills necessary to bring them in line with their peers so that they make accelerated progress and the gap closes. In too many classes, however, this is not the case. In these examples, the tasks and work given to the lowest attainers is much less demanding than that given to the highest attainers. In this situation, the gap between the two groups does not close and lower-attaining pupils continue to make weaker progress.

Pupils are slow to develop the skills of independent learning. This is because they are not consistently given opportunities to practise them, for example by responding to questioning or by developing ideas and working with their peers. Homework and class work are consistently marked with helpful comments. However, pupils cannot always read the comments that teachers make.

The school is quickly developing and mapping opportunities to reinforce literacy and numeracy in subjects other than mathematics and English. Good plans exist but their implementation is uneven and opportunities to develop these areas in class are often lost. Leaders' lesson observations do not monitor, systematically, this important aspect of provision.

Much work has been undertaken on the improvement of provision for those pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs. Individual education plans are succinct and clear. The monitoring of progress is now systematic and accurate. Staff have been trained and new policies written for their guidance. Baseline assessments have now been undertaken for all those pupils concerned so that all teachers are aware of the standards that they have attained and the support that they need.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- eradicating inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion of good or better teaching to at least 50% by 2012 – satisfactory.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate. Staff indicate that they have been involved in its production, and the school has a good view of its strengths and weaknesses. Improvement plans are detailed, and have clear and challenging targets contained in them that are time limited with clear areas of responsibility.

The setting and monitoring of whole-school targets by the governing body is carried out, and targets are appropriate. However, the monitoring of progress towards them is weak and not well documented in governing body. This means that staff are insufficiently aware of the progress that they are making towards improving the school. The governing body and the headteacher recognise this issue and steps are being taken to rectify the situation. Assessment practice is now systematic and accurate. The governing body is fully briefed on aspects of school performance. Much training has recently been undertaken. However, there is a recognition that this needs to be extended to aspects of data analysis now used by inspectors. At the time of visiting, the local authority had not installed representative governors.

The management of teaching and learning is improving and is leading to improvements in classroom practice. The process is systematic and diagnostic, accurately identifying areas for development. Associated with this, good practice is increasingly well-identified and shared. Leaders' lesson observations do not focus enough on the standards that students attain in class and the progress that they make. Often, the emphasis of the observation is on what the teacher does rather than what the pupils learn. As a consequence, opportunities to improve learning are lost. Partnership arrangements with other schools are developing well and have enabled many staff to undertake peer lesson observations.

The school has introduced a skills-based curriculum which enables themes to be investigated across subjects. This approach is intended to enable the more effective acquisition of skills so that the curriculum is more accessible to all pupils. In addition, the accurate mapping of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is well underway so that these aspects can be developed in subjects other than mathematics and English. The provision of extra-curricular activities and enrichment has improved since the last inspection.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve the quality of leadership and management to accelerate the rate of improvement and ensure that outcomes for pupils are significantly better in 2012 – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action is detailed and fit-for-purpose. The authority is providing satisfactory support to the school. Staff appreciate specialist advice on assessment methodology and in the development of mathematics and aspects of literacy. Arrangements have been made to pair the school with a nearby high achieving school and the sharing of expertise is developing well as a result. The school is still awaiting the nomination by the local authority of its governors.

Priorities for further improvement:

- Install local authority representation on the governing body and increase the challenge given by governors.