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Mr Marcus Holloway
Headteacher
Iver Heath Junior School
St Margaret's Close
Iver Heath
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Dear Mr Holloway

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Iver Heath Junior School

Following my visit with Fatiha Maitland, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 April 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 November 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 judgement is set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – 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 the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

James Henry
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements by:
 - immediately implementing regular risk assessments for school activities and reviewing them on a regular basis
 - immediately providing adequate supervision at break and lunchtimes
 - providing child protection training for all staff as soon as practical.

- Improve the quality of teaching in all year groups by:
 - ensuring teachers make more effective use of data about pupils' prior learning when planning lessons
 - providing all pupils, particularly the more able, with work that is consistently challenging
 - ensuring greater consistency in teachers' marking and that best practice is shared across the school
 - providing a better balance between the time used by the teacher for explaining activities and the amount of time pupils have for completing tasks
 - ensuring lesson activities are better targeted on groups of pupils who are underachieving, for example boys in writing.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills and experience of middle leaders so that they are effective in raising the quality of teaching
 - improving systems for identifying the progress made by pupils from different groups
 - improving planning and evaluation for community cohesion and for ensuring all pupils have equal opportunity
 - making more effective use of others who work with the school to improve pupils' achievements
 - ensuring the governing body provides effective challenge and support for the school in order to bring about improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Iver Heath Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 24-25 April 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the interim executive board, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection, the teacher responsible for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the additional resource provision (ARP) for pupils with speech and language difficulties has left the school. Two part-time teachers have just been appointed to support pupils who may be disabled or have special educational needs. A teacher provided by the local authority who has expertise in special educational needs is working alongside an additional teacher employed by the school to support pupils in the ARP. The governing body has been replaced by an Interim Executive Board led by an experienced Chair. Two temporary teachers have been employed to teach Years 5 and 6. Additional funding from the local authority is being used to employ staff to allow senior and middle leaders to be released from teaching responsibilities in order to focus on monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

School assessments, supported by evidence from lesson observations and pupils' work, show attainment is expected to rise by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012, with pupils in Year 6 on track to exceed government floor targets in both English and mathematics. However, the school is not consistently narrowing the gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils. For instance, while the school has set challenging targets, at present the number of more-able pupils on track to attain the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics is not rising. While the school is working hard to address underachievement, resulting in a slow improvement to pupils' progress, there are still pockets of inadequate progress across the school, especially in writing. Variations in the progress that pupils make across year groups and in different subjects have not been reliably addressed or remedied. For example, progress in mathematics is better than that in reading and writing, and progress in Year 3 and 6 is better than in Year 4 and 5. Consequently, progress is still not consistently good enough to address underachievement quickly.

Pupils continue to show positive attitudes to their learning. Teachers are beginning to plan lessons that engage and excite pupils and consequently in these lessons pupils make better progress. For example, pupils enjoyed role-playing by having a

meal in an 'Italian Restaurant', sampling different pastas being served by staff. They then had to provide appropriate customer service feedback. This not only enabled pupils to enjoy their learning but also developed their confidence and ability to learn for themselves.

The quality of teaching

While no inadequate teaching was observed, teaching is not improving quickly enough to ensure pupils make consistently better progress in order to address underachievement. However, lessons are now more effectively involving pupils in their own learning rather being teacher led. There is a better balance between teachers explaining the purpose of the lesson and pupils working on given tasks. Although teachers' understanding and use of data about pupils' prior learning is still inconsistent, the planning of activities in lessons for different ability groups has improved. However, the level of challenge, especially for the more able, is too variable. Senior leaders have made teachers more aware of underachieving groups in their classes, especially boys in writing, but the impact of this on increasing the rate at which pupils learn has yet to be seen.

Work has begun on developing teachers' confidence in the accurate use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress. However, there is still too much reliance on formal tests at the end of each term to monitor pupils' progress. Despite the introduction of an updated marking policy, there are still too many inconsistencies in the quality of written feedback for pupils. While staff work hard on written comments for pupils about how to improve their work, especially in writing, there is limited opportunity for pupils to respond and practise the guidance given. The school has a system of targets for pupils to achieve; however, this is being reviewed and changed because it is not fully effective in helping pupils understand what they have to do to improve.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching in all year groups – inadequate.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to behave well and have positive attitudes to school. Attendance is average, with most pupils being punctual for school. Relationships are good and staff manage pupils' behaviour with an appropriate balance between being firm and providing pleasant pastoral care. Pupils appreciate the better supervision at break and lunchtimes and the new playground equipment provided. The more structured approach to playtimes, including restrictions on pupils playing inside the school and other inappropriate areas, means that pupils feel far safer. Consequently, pupils said that they no longer worried about the possibility of bullying taking place. This is an

improvement since the last inspection. Pupils also confirmed that bullying of any kind was now very rare. The school has provided effective training for lunchtime supervisors and this has had positive outcomes, with supervisors engaging pupils in games and activities during lunchtimes. Older pupils have been trained as playground leaders and at breaktimes they prompt and lead other pupils, especially those who may not make friends easily, in various games,. As a result of these initiatives, all groups of pupils now enjoy their time in the playground.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, continues to focus intensely and clearly on addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Safeguarding training has been implemented, improved playground supervision is in place, and risk assessments for the school building, site and out-of-school activities undertaken. While dates for review are given, provision to evaluate risk assessments regularly to ensure they are fully effective is not clearly identified. All staff have now received appropriate child protection training.

Certain initiatives to improve the quality of teaching have been successful, such as involving pupils more actively in lessons. However, while other strategies have been introduced, including sharing good practice and developing marking, they have not been fully embedded and have yet to be effective in consistently improving the overall quality of teaching. There is a comprehensive tracking system in place to monitor pupils' progress. While this is well understood and analysed by senior leaders, and more recently by middle leaders, the use of assessments by teachers is inconsistent in identifying and addressing underachievement in different groups of pupils. Consequently, equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils is not fully embedded across year groups.

The school is following closely the agreed comprehensive action plan. Progress towards termly targets is being monitored regularly by a focus group established by the local authority. Addressing safeguarding issues was given immediate priority and the school successfully met this initial target. Middle leaders have begun to develop their roles in order to build the school's capacity for improvement. There has been limited progress in ensuring community cohesion is consistently promoted throughout the school because plans to review the curriculum to identify opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and communities are at an early stage of development.

An interim executive board has very recently been established and has begun to provide better challenge and support for the school. However, it has not had time to have a full impact on raising standards and improving the capacity for sustained improvement.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements – satisfactory.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – inadequate.

External support

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose and provides an appropriate framework for action. Constant and positive support is being provided by the local authority through the provision of external consultants, particularly to raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. However, the impact of the support provided has yet to be fully seen. Some of the immediate actions identified in the statement of action have been effectively carried out and have made a satisfactory contribution to school improvement, particularly in regard to the safeguarding of pupils. The local authority has provided additional funding to allow the school to employ extra staff to support pupils' learning.