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13 July 2012

Mrs Wilson
The Headteacher
Talavera Infant School
Gun Hill
Aldershot
GU11 1RG

Dear Mrs Wilson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Talavera Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

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 Surrey.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Browning
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' attainment so that a greater proportion of pupils reach or exceed the nationally expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - providing a curriculum that effectively meets the needs of all pupils and develops their skills in literacy and mathematics across all subjects
 - extending and enriching the curriculum with a range of activities that will broaden pupils' experiences
 - improving the quality of teaching as soon as possible, so that 80% is good or better, ensuring that pace and challenge are improved and providing targets for pupils that they will understand.
- Increase the effectiveness of the school's leaders and governors in driving school improvement by:
 - setting challenging targets in respect of pupils' attainment at the end of the school year and key stage, in order to raise expectations of pupils' progress
 - ensuring that procedures to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the school's work are implemented with rigour and are effective in underpinning the school's self-evaluation.
- Raise attendance to 95% and improve punctuality by:
 - developing and implementing a range of effective strategies to promote pupils' regular attendance and punctuality
 - introducing robust systems to monitor and analyse pupils' attendance and lateness to school so that appropriate and supportive action can be taken.

Special Measures: monitoring of Talavera Infant School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 July 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, including assessment data, strategic plans and monitoring and evaluation evidence. She met with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, one other governor, and two representatives from the local authority. Teaching was observed in each year group and pupils' work was scrutinised. Eleven lessons were jointly observed with members of the school's leadership team.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection one teacher has returned from long-term absence and another is on long-term absence. The staff structure is now embedded and the school roll has risen slightly. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals has risen, as has the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. Of the pupils, 75% are from military families, but this number is reducing. Two new governors have been appointed: a parent governor and another from the local community.

Achievement of pupils at the school

School information on pupils' progress, unvalidated assessments at the end of Year 2 and inspection evidence, indicates pupils' achievement has improved considerably since the last monitoring visit. The majority of pupils are on track to reach or exceed the school's challenging targets and national expectations. Boys' writing is above age-related expectations. These outcomes reflect the improvements in teaching. Pupils are more active learners because interesting activities provide increasing opportunities for them to develop their skills in literacy and mathematics across subjects through topic work. Nonetheless, more able pupils are not consistently challenged and the pace of their learning slows down at times. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is much closer to national averages. Pupils' achievement in reading has improved significantly, especially over the last six months. The teaching of letters and their sounds (known as phonics) is effectively promoted from Reception to Year 2. Guided reading, now a normal feature of lessons, reading clubs for targeted pupils and reading workshops for those with English as an additional language are all having a positive impact on reading attainment. Increasing parental involvement in their child's reading and certificates awarded for achievement are also raising the importance of reading. In Year 2, setting in mathematics and booster groups show good impact on raising attainment and improving progress.

Leaders and managers have secured accurate checks on pupils' progress. This information, alongside robust half-termly pupil progress meetings, is effectively used to pinpoint any underperformance, trigger interventions and inform future planning. Consequently, more recently the rate of progress across the classes in each year group and across subjects is accelerating. Pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is rising, but not as markedly as in reading. Writing continues to be a relative weakness, especially pupils' use of punctuation, spelling and presentation.

The gaps between different groups of pupils are closing. Pupils with English as an additional language continue to make good progress. Pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs make similarly good progress towards their targets. This is because individual and small group work and interventions enable pupils to improve their key skills in literacy and numeracy.

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

- raise pupils' attainment so that a greater proportion of pupils reach or exceed the nationally expected levels for their age in reading, writing and mathematics – good.

The quality of teaching

Teaching quality continues to improve. No inadequate teaching was observed, reflecting the school's own monitoring. Leaders are working hard to ensure that all lessons provide enjoyable, creative, well-organised and challenging learning experiences. With support from the local authority, a common planning format has ensured that teaching is usually better matched to pupils' needs. Pupils know and understand their targets and use 'thumbs up' or 'down' and smiley faces to assess their own progress. As one pupil told the inspector, 'My learning has got better and better.' Generic strengths are seen in teachers' warm relationships, expectations of behaviour, good modelling of skills, use of resources, questioning and sharing of learning objectives in lessons. Teaching assistants usually contribute most effectively to pupils' learning in lessons and demonstrated good skills in one-to-one reading and small group sessions, teaching phonics, and supporting pupils' mathematical skills. Pupils work collaboratively and are encouraged to check their learning, for example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson pupils used writing prompts and checklists to check they had used 'wow' words, adjectives and speech marks correctly. In less effective lessons, tasks were not challenging enough or sufficiently clear, with the result that the pace of learning slowed down. Marking did not clearly show next steps for improvement or pick up on untidy presentation.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and friendly and say they feel safe. They particularly enjoy the increased extra-curricular clubs and visits. Pupils say behaviour is typically good, whilst acknowledging occasional name calling, play fighting and pushing, but say this is dealt with quickly. The inspector observed good behaviour throughout the monitoring visit. The recently formed pastoral care group shares information and

links with agencies and families to support those most vulnerable. There are many opportunities to encourage pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. One example is Camouflage Club, set up to support those pupils whose parents or carers are deployed in Afghanistan. Pupils showed great empathy posting photographs and sending 'blueys', electronic messages about what they were doing at school. They were thrilled to see photographs and hear responses from Camp Bastion, showing 'Freddy teddy' and 'Alfie' the club mascot on tour. Punctuality is much improved and attendance rates at 94.8% have improved by 1.1% compared to last year. The school tracks attendance carefully and regularly sends letters home when there are concerns or to celebrate pupils' attendance. However, a significant number of pupils, including in Reception, is not improving attendance fast enough, presenting a significant barrier to progress. Continuing to engage with the families of children with poor attendance, including the few persistent absentees, remains an on-going challenge.

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

- raise attendance to 95% and improve punctuality – good.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The increased effectiveness of leaders, including the governing body, is driving school improvement. Staff work together more effectively. Leaders demonstrate increased confidence and influence in analysing information on pupils' progress, evaluating other outcomes and in monitoring provision to bring about improvements. The headteacher has a clear view of current teaching quality and is less reliant on the local authority for staff professional development. Monitoring systems are bedding in; particularly effective is the use of the comprehensive tracking system to pinpoint any underperformance. Monitoring is rigorous and expected by staff as part of the cycle for improvement. Middle leaders have developed their roles and are directly involved in development planning. Teachers are more accountable and responsive to the considerable and effective coaching and mentoring provided to improve their practice. The headteacher has ensured effective school improvement planning and accurate self-evaluation. She is determined to build on the school's success and is tackling existing weaknesses head on, for example challenging the underachievement of the more able and developing the curriculum to ensure greater opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences. The headteacher and governors are rightly focused on improving provision in Reception, especially the outside learning areas, and securing accurate information on children's starting points. Governors use their expertise, plan strategically, and challenge school performance. For example, they wanted to be better informed and so insisted on a sharper generic reporting format, giving them greater insight into developments and so enabling them to become more rigorous in challenging school performance. All key areas show improvement since the last monitoring visit, the next challenge for leaders is to sustain the improvements and ensure consistency of practice during the next phase of staffing changes.

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

- increase the effectiveness of the school's leaders and governors in driving school improvement – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good quality support. It has ensured that school leaders are developing the necessary skills to build on, and to sustain, the momentum of school improvement. The local authority has provided training for middle leaders and has enabled staff to have a greater understanding of what they should do to improve classroom practice. More recently the level of support offered has reduced, reflecting the growing confidence in the school's own leadership to continue to manage change and drive forward improvements.