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27 September 2012

Mr Tunstall and Ms Bennett
Fenstanton Primary School
Abbots Park
London
SW2 3PW

Dear Mr Tunstall and Ms Bennett

Special measures monitoring inspection of Fenstanton Primary School

Following my visit with Jennifer Bax, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 September 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2012. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed as the local authority deems necessary.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 of Gipsy Hill Federation and the Director of Children's Services for Lambeth.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2012

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in Mathematics and in English throughout the school by:
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills, especially their reading
 - developing pupils' number skills and their ability to solve problems in mathematics.

- Improve the quality of teaching and the use of assessment information so these are consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that teachers in each key stage plan work which matches pupils' needs and provides a good level of challenge, particularly for low- and high-attaining pupils
 - enhancing the quality of resources and the learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- Strengthen the capacity and impact of leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, in driving school improvement by:
 - rigorously monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching and the curriculum on pupils' progress, and taking swift action to bring about any required improvement
 - ensuring that leaders and managers develop the necessary skills to enable them to meet their responsibilities, including the implementation of school improvement priorities, so that weaknesses can be addressed
 - making sure there are detailed and accurate whole-school systems to assess and record pupils' progress
 - enabling the governing body to monitor thoroughly the school's work and offer support and challenge to senior leaders about its performance.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 September 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher of the Gipsy Hill federation of schools, the headteacher, representatives of the governing body and the school improvement group, senior leaders, the school's child protection team, and a representative of the local authority. They talked formally and informally with pupils about their work, behaviour and safety. The inspectors visited 20 part lessons, jointly with the headteacher and executive headteacher, and observed the work of those teaching small groups as part of the school's intervention programme.

Context

Since March 2012, the school has been led and managed by the Gipsy Hill federation of schools, a cross-borough federation of five primary schools and two children's centres. Staff from the Gipsy Hill federation of schools and new appointments have replaced three quarters of the school's teaching staff since June 2012. The school is undergoing a new-build programme. While this work is continuing, and to ensure there is no disruption to learning, three Year 6 classes are taught in accommodation at Kingswood Primary School. This arrangement has been in place for this group of pupils since March 2012, when Fenstanton school first joined the federation.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In Years 1 to 6, pupils' attainment is improving well, with most year groups now working close to age-related expectations. Pupils who join the school with attainment that is much lower than expected are making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The gaps between the attainment of boys and girls are closing, as they are for other groups in the school. This is a result of significantly improved teaching and good partnership working between the school, families and school leaders.

The many opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills are ensuring pupils consolidate their learning. The daily programme of teaching reading, with a focus on the systematic teaching of sounds, small group focused reading lessons and the regular hearing pupils read is improving attainment for all groups of pupils. In addition, there is a well-resourced programme of additional interventions for those pupils who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy associated with their special educational needs or who are well behind their year group. The staff who teach these sessions are appropriately trained, assess and review the learning well and provide good feedback to the pupils.

Classrooms and corridors provide strong support for the development of basic skills. Pupils' work is presented clearly with an attention to quality and there are useful prompts to help support pupils so they can work independently of adults. The acquisition of wider literacy skills, particularly spoken language, has a high priority across the school and is taught well through subjects such as music. The bedrock for sustaining the rapidly improving development of literacy and numeracy skills starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is excellent provision for children's language, physical and personal, social and emotional development through guided and self-chosen activity both indoors and outside.

The gaps in pupils' numeracy skills are better understood by teachers because of the development of a robust system for assessing pupils. The initial focus to improve presentation and teach pupils a range of methods, including mental arithmetic, is increasing pupils' confidence and progress. In Years 5 and 6, there are good examples of word problems and pupils confidently using inverse operations. Overall, however, there are insufficient opportunities built into the curriculum and daily lessons to use and apply these skills to ensure higher-attaining pupils reach expected levels across all year groups.

The quality of teaching

Leaders' and teachers' aspirations for the pupils are high and effective practice is securing improvements in teaching and learning across the school. Lessons are well planned to match the needs of different groups. The analysis of pupils' progress information gathered from work scrutiny, lesson observations and teacher assessments is effectively transferred to daily and weekly planning. The lessons are practical, and independent thinking is encouraged by the tasks, a good range of resources and well-targeted adult support. In a Year 2 literacy lesson, a group of lower-attaining pupils prepared for their independent writing by rehearsing a set of adjectives they had chosen to use. Careful attention to reading the words using phonics before writing short sentences resulted in good progress towards greater independence as a writer. The teacher had prepared the pupils' books with pictures to serve as further prompt and the adult supporting the activity used these to encourage discussion that successfully improved pupils' vocabulary.

Pupils really enjoy their lessons; there is an atmosphere of cooperation in learning with higher-attaining pupils challenging each other. Well-taught small group reading sessions encourage enthusiasm for reading. Writing skills are broken into smaller and less-daunting targets for pupils and there is good support through setting out examples or providing task sheets to help pupils.

The impact of this more effective planning is not yet consistently effective in securing good learning in all lessons. On occasions, the teachers direct learning too much, inhibiting pupils from thinking and challenging themselves. In these lessons, questioning is too narrow and does not encourage contributions from more pupils. At

times, some teachers, and teaching assistants, focus too much on completing the activity rather than how well individuals are using and developing their skills. The teaching of mathematics is generally weaker with some teachers lacking sufficient expertise to challenge pupils' learning effectively.

The quality of resources and environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is rich, stimulating and exciting. The buzz of children learning through talking, exploring and creating is tangible. All children immerse themselves safely in activities. They quickly develop a good base of social and communication skills and the extent of their learning through self-chosen activity is impressive. The support offered by adults is exemplary and contributes to some excellent progress across all areas of learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Across the school, pupils are hungry and eager to learn. Pupils say they feel safe and know that the systems and procedures to keep them safe work well. They treat each other with respect and incidents of poor behaviour are reducing. Pupils value the attention given to their achievements, and the support they receive to do even better. Pupils enter and leave school happy. They move around school in an orderly manner, and are attentive in lessons. Attendance and punctuality are all improving.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher and partnership working as a whole is a strength of the school. The school is making excellent progress in securing the quality of leadership required to improve the school's performance. Leaders and managers across the federation of schools have set an inspiring and ambitious vision for all learners and their families at Fenstanton Primary School. There is no room for compromise in the drive for high standards, quality and performance. The rapid implementation of rigorous systems and practices has made a significant difference to pupils' attitudes towards learning, parental engagement and provision in the school. The management of child protection is diligent and thorough. The team work closely with the full range of local services to provide high-quality support for vulnerable children.

The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. A wide range of staff development programmes underpin the routine and rigorous monitoring of teachers' performance and provision. Senior leaders consistently lead on mentoring, modelling best practice and in-class support. This has had strong impact on turning around the quality of teaching so that more is good and outstanding. The federation uses its resources effectively to ensure that newly appointed staff, newly qualified teachers and less experienced teachers have the support needed to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. Consequently, the lower attainers, those with special educational needs and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid progress. The sharing of subject teaching skills across subjects and year groups has built capacity

quickly, but leaders also recognise that more work is needed to embed assessment for learning in all lessons.

The gathering of quantitative and qualitative performance data is now in place. There is rigour and breadth in these systems that ensures interventions and lesson planning are focused precisely on narrowing the gaps in attainment between groups of learners and meeting challenging targets for individuals and year groups.

The governing body is experienced in working with underperforming and failing schools. It has well-established systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and has provided the challenge needed to improve teaching and learning and provision.

External support

The local authority monitors closely the impact of school leaders and governors on the progress of the school towards the objectives set out in its comprehensive statement of action. It has worked quickly to build capacity in the school through its support for staff restructuring as well as addressing performance management issues.