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12 November 2012

Miss Joanne Erasmus
Headteacher
Turnfurlong Junior School
Turnfurlong Lane
Aylesbury
HP21 7PL

Dear Miss Erasmus

Special measures monitoring inspection of Turnfurlong Junior School

Following my visit with Gail Robertson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 November 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 that 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 that took place in May 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 in any subject.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that all pupils make at least good progress, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
 - providing more opportunities for them to write at length and to consolidate their writing skills in other lessons
 - improving their skills when undertaking mathematical investigations.

- By Easter 2013 improve the quality of teaching and learning to at least good by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information effectively to raise expectations and to challenge all groups of pupils, particularly the more able
 - eliminating inadequate teaching and ensuring all pupils make more rapid progress in lessons and over time
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils consistently receive regular guidance to improve their work
 - making certain that all lessons proceed at an appropriate pace, engaging pupils in learning
 - making sure teachers use questioning strategies effectively.

- As a matter of urgency, strengthen the capacity for sustaining school improvement by:
 - improving the skills of senior and middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and in taking action to address weaknesses
 - ensuring that school development plans clearly identify the desired outcomes so that success can be evaluated
 - developing the skills of the governing body in holding senior leaders to account for pupils' achievements and the pace of school improvement.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 8–9 November 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They observed 13 parts of lessons taught by 12 teachers. The inspectors had detailed discussions with: the headteacher; school staff with specialist responsibility for literacy, numeracy, science and safeguarding; the Chair of the Interim Executive Board; the headteacher of the link infant school; a representative from the local authority; and two groups of pupils.

Context

The characteristics of the school have radically changed since the last section 5 inspection. The governing body has been removed by the local authority and replaced by an Interim Executive Board which has held meetings with the school leadership and local authority monitoring teams. The headteacher of the nearby infant school, who is also head of the Buckinghamshire Teaching School Partnership, has been appointed as executive headteacher. The current headteacher, who was new in post at the time of the previous inspection, has been allocated a headteacher mentor. A local authority monitoring officer has been allocated to the school. The senior leadership roles have been restructured. The teacher with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs (SENCO) at the infant school has been appointed as SENCO at the junior school. At the end of the summer term 2012, two members of staff left the school and at the end of the autumn term 2012, three members of staff will be leaving. There is currently one member of staff on long-term sick leave. There will be new literacy and numeracy coordinators at the end of the autumn term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Analysis of unvalidated results for 2012, first-hand evidence generated during this visit, school data, and external checks by the local authority show that pupils are making better progress this year than they were this time last year. The achievement of pupils is increasing in writing and mathematics since the school was judged to require special measures. Pupils now routinely use dictionaries and thesauri to use more imaginative words in their extended writing. Pupils' investigative skills in mathematics are being developed more thoroughly as a result of teachers providing more stimulating and interesting mathematical investigations for pupils to undertake. Although school data indicate that more-able pupils are making better progress, the level of stretch and challenge for these pupils in some lessons remains limited.

The quality of teaching

During this monitoring visit, the quality of teaching and learning that was good or better increased compared with that identified by external monitoring at the end of the summer term. In all the parts of lessons seen, learning success criteria were clear and understood by pupils and staff. These are recorded well in books and teachers' marking is now extremely good in English and mathematics, and becoming better in other subjects. Teachers' comments show pupils how well they have done in relation to their targets and encourage pupils to try their best. Pupils said that they found these comments very useful for improving their work. Pupils have the opportunity to reflect on, and respond to, the marking.

Teachers have a better understanding of how pupils can make expected and better progress in lessons and they ensure more consistently that tasks are sharply focused on raising pupils' attainment. Teachers now check regularly that pupils actually understand and master the concepts and skills being developed. They are beginning to use assessment information better to tailor lesson tasks to the different abilities of pupils, but this process is taking more time to be embedded in some lessons. Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium or who have special educational needs make much better progress than at the time of the last inspection. This is because teachers now use additional adults more effectively to ensure that pupils who require extra support make better progress. The progress made by those who are more able remains limited in some lessons. Teachers have improved their skills in questioning pupils, but they still miss opportunities to ask deeper questions which require pupils to reflect longer before they answer or show how they worked out their answers. The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that pupils' writing and numeracy skills are developed in a wider range of lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All pupils who talked to inspectors said that they enjoyed school. One boy said that since the inspectors came last time, he now enjoyed his investigation work in mathematics, and there was general agreement that there was less sitting on the mat listening to teachers talk and more opportunities to write and think. Pupils behaved impeccably in lessons and around the school. They confirmed that instances of bullying are infrequent and that they felt very safe at school. Inspection findings agreed with pupils that teachers manage behaviour well. Attendance remains above average.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The changes made to the governance of the school, the restructuring of the senior leadership of the school, the strengthened links with the infant school and rigorous monitoring by the local authority have all helped the headteacher to put in place

good procedures for school improvement and gain the confidence and support of the staff. As a result, the capacity of the school to bring about rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress has been much enhanced. Clear and secure measurable outcomes are now available which demonstrate that new procedures at the time of the previous inspection are now having a positive impact on pupils' progress. The promotion of equal opportunity and tackling discrimination are not now inadequate. The curriculum has been tailored better to meet the academic needs of pupils so that there are more opportunities for pupils to make better progress, especially in developing writing skills. School improvement planning has been strengthened and the Interim Executive Board and local authority rigorously monitor progress towards challenging improvement targets. Middle managers still do not consistently monitor the quality of teaching well enough within their areas of responsibility and some of the initiatives put in place to bring about improvement in leadership capacity have not had time to impact fully on results.

External support

The local authority has provided good support to enable important changes to take place. It has secured the establishment of an Interim Executive Board of governors to drive forward school improvement. It has also provided good leadership support for the headteacher, brokered a strengthened link with the on-site infant school and helped to appoint the headteacher of the infant school as executive headteacher of the junior school. This also has enhanced the quality of support that teachers have to improve their teaching skills, since the infant school is a leading teacher school in the Buckinghamshire Teaching School Partnership. Good support has also been provided by local authority consultants for improving the quality of teaching and learning and for numeracy.