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16 November 2012

Mr Daniel Knuckey
The Deputy Headteacher
Iver Heath Junior School
St Margaret's Close
Iver Heath
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Dear Mr Knuckey

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Iver Heath Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 November 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 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 judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 second monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 November 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, members of the interim executive board of governors and a representative from the local authority. The inspector visited 16 lessons or part lessons, of which six were in conjunction with the deputy headteacher, observed eight teachers and talked to groups of pupils.

Context

Since the last inspection the deputy headteacher has taken over responsibility for the leadership and management of the school on a temporary basis and three teachers have left the school, two of whom were middle leaders. They have been replaced with two senior leaders. One has responsibility for mathematics and one for disabled pupils or those with special educational needs. The school has employed a teacher on a temporary basis.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment rose at the end of Year 6 in 2012 in English and mathematics, especially in the number of pupils achieving the higher level in reading. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is closing the gap with national figures, although pupils' achievement was better in reading and mathematics than in writing. Overall attainment in English was boosted by the number of pupils who achieved the higher levels in reading. Teacher assessments, pupils' work and observations in lessons show that pupil progress across the school is beginning to increase and consequently attainment is starting to rise. For example, pupils in Year 6 are on track to raise attainment in English and mathematics further by the time they leave in 2013. Progress is beginning to improve because pupils are being more involved in learning through practical activities in lessons, particularly in mathematics. For example, in one mathematics lesson pupils enjoyed being challenged through measuring toy cars and then designing garages that would be suitable to house them. However, progress is still inconsistent, especially in boys' writing. Assessments show that pupils make better progress overall in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4. Groups of pupils, particularly White British pupils, also make inconsistent progress depending on the year group or class they are in. For example, girls make better progress than boys in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 3, but boys make better progress than girls in reading and mathematics in Year 4. The progress of different groups of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is also inconsistent. Pupils supported at school action plus are making better progress than other groups of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs in Years 3 and 4, especially in writing.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. In their planning, teachers are beginning to use information about pupils' progress to plan tasks in lessons that meet the needs of different groups of pupils. However, tasks are not always pitched at the right level with some activities lacking challenge and being too easy and others too hard. For example, in a mathematics lesson pupils were completing easy tasks before tackling the activity that was designed to challenge their thinking. In another mathematics lesson, pupils were struggling to find the correct coordinates on a graph because they did not have a full understanding of negative numbers.

The school has introduced a new marking system with most teachers giving positive guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. However, not all teachers regularly check pupils work to ensure they act on the guidance given. As a result, there is inconsistency in teachers' use of marking and the new system is not fully embedded in all classes.

Teachers are beginning to engage pupils more in lessons through positive use of question and answer sessions and practical activities. For example, in an English lesson, where pupils were learning to write about the past, pupils passed through an imaginary time portal while listening to music from a television science fiction programme. This type of imaginary approach motivates pupils and consequently the rate at which different groups learn in some year groups, especially in Year 6, is beginning to increase and close the gap with pupils nationally. However, this is not consistent across the school. There are still too many occasions, particularly at the beginning of lessons, where the teachers spend too long explaining different group activities to the whole class and miss opportunities to quickly settle pupils to work. This slows the pace of pupils' learning.

Teachers with increasing effectiveness are identifying groups of pupils who are underachieving because they are using assessments to plan activities in lessons that aim to meet the needs of different groups. While teachers are identifying those pupils who are underachieving, extra support to help those pupils has just been introduced. This has not had time to be fully embedded across the school and have a full impact on ensuring pupils quickly catch up in their learning.

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

- improve the quality of teaching in all year groups – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to show positive attitudes to school. They are polite and courteous to staff and each other and are keen to learn. Pupils behave well in class and generally around the school. In the lessons observed there was no disruption to learning through inappropriate behaviour. There is a consistent approach to managing pupils'

behaviour with staff using rewards to promote good behaviour and pupils respond well to correction when needed.

The improvement in supervision at break and lunchtimes and the provision of more playground activities to occupy pupils have become part of the daily routine. The training that lunchtime supervisors and pupil 'play leaders' have undertaken is having a positive effect in engaging pupils in games, such as skipping, and ensures the playground is not only an enjoyable place for pupils but is also safe and secure. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe in school, that bullying is rare and any instances of inappropriate behaviour are quickly dealt with by staff.

Attendance is high with almost all pupils being punctual for school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The deputy headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, has successfully taken over the leadership of the school and continued the ambition and drive to improve the quality of teaching and raise standards. The school has clear action plans that focus specifically on improving the quality of teaching and increasing the rates at which pupils learn. Initiatives, such as the use of assessments to plan activities in lessons for different groups and the new approach to marking, while still not fully effective in all classes, are beginning to improve the quality of teaching. However, there are still missed opportunities to improve teaching because not all senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching in lessons in order to provide feedback to teachers on how to improve and share good practice. Also, while the local authority has provided training for middle leaders, their role in improving the quality of teaching continues to be limited.

The tracking system to monitor pupils' progress is now informing senior leaders about the inconsistencies in pupil progress. For example, the deputy headteacher had a clear understanding about the need to improve the writing skills of White British boys. This is an improvement since the last inspection and shows that self-evaluation is increasingly accurate and, because teaching and the progress of pupils are beginning to improve, that senior leaders have the capacity to continue to improve the school.

While topics in the curriculum such as Black History Month promote pupils' cultural development, planning and evaluating community cohesion has not been a priority for the school and therefore progress towards this aspect continues to be limited. However, because the tracking system is now being used to monitor the progress of different groups, the school is beginning to ensure pupils have an equality of opportunity in their learning.

Teachers are working alongside advisory teachers and consultants from the local authority. This is beginning to have a positive effect on improving the quality of teaching. However, some initiatives, such as support for the new teacher with

responsibility for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, have not had time to be fully effective.

The interim executive board of governors is now established and the governors are providing challenge as well as support for the school. For example, they challenge senior leaders to provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' progress across the school rather than just being given data. Also members of the interim executive board are linked to a year group and they visit school regularly to monitor pupil progress and the quality of teaching.

Risk assessments, such as meeting fire regulations or assessing risks on school trips, are now routinely undertaken and reviewed. All staff have undertaken appropriate child protection training. Safeguarding is given a high priority, with new staff being fully vetted and inducted into the school's child protection procedures.

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

- ensure safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements – good
- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority is providing good support through arranging for advisory teachers to work in lessons with teachers and providing consultants to lead professional training for staff on teaching and learning. Also, opportunities have been arranged for teachers to observe good practice in other schools. These initiatives are beginning to have a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching.