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22 November 2012

Ms K Luxford
Headteacher
Sandown School
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Dear Ms Luxford

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sandown School

Following my visit to your school on 20–21 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 February 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 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 to any year group.

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 Kent.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge
Additional inspector

Annex

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

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - establishing greater challenge by the governing body
 - rigorously monitoring and revisiting lessons to eradicate inadequate teaching, checking that pupils are thoroughly engaged and inspired
 - closely monitoring the impact of strategies to accelerate progress of all groups, especially that of boys, those known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - providing appropriate training to staff in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics
 - improving the planned curriculum and increasing resources.

- Improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in English to good by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should do, ensuring that work is planned to meet pupils' differing abilities
 - improving the teaching of phonics (the way sounds and letters are linked), especially at Key Stage 1
 - ensuring that boys are challenged and excited by reading and writing
 - ensuring that teachers mark pupils' written work effectively, so the pupils know exactly how to improve their skills
 - helping pupils to edit, extend and improve their writing more often
 - linking reading and writing more with visits, visitors and other subjects.

- Urgently accelerate pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in mathematics by:
 - ensuring a progressive approach to the teaching of calculation skills
 - checking carefully that pupils know and use their targets for improvement
 - ensuring work is matched to pupils' abilities
 - making sure the pupils practice, know and understand their times table and use jottings to show different methods of calculation
 - providing more interesting real-life problem solving across the curriculum
 - ensuring older pupils have a good understanding about decimals and percentages.

Special measures: monitoring of Sandown School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 20–21 November 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, other senior and middle leaders and a representative from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of staff who joined the school or who were appointed to new classes from September. The inspector held discussions with pupils from across the school as they worked in their classrooms and met with a group of 12 pupils separately. A small number of pupils were heard read from Years 2 and 6. During this visit, the headteacher and deputy headteacher jointly observed two lessons and 13 part lessons were observed overall.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit there have been several changes in teaching staff. Three new teachers started this term in Years 1, 2 and 3 and one teacher who was on a temporary contract was appointed permanently to teach one of the Reception classes. There have also been some changes in administration staffing such as a new office manager. A new part-time play leader was also appointed from October 2012. New posts of Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 phase leader and Key Stage 2 phase leader were appointed from within the existing staff and they started their roles this term. Two lessons focusing on the teaching of letter sounds and combinations (often known as phonics) were observed in the Reception classes, but the work of the Early Years Foundation Stage was not a focus for this visit.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement has continued to improve, confirmed by some positive results in the last national tests. Year 2 pupils improved upon the previous year's results in both reading and mathematics, although writing results were still below the national picture, particularly for the higher-ability pupils. Results of the national phonics (letter sounds and combinations) screening tests reflect levels which were just below those reached nationally. Pupils in Year 6 achieved the school's best results for some time in national tests as they broadly reached average levels in English and in mathematics. Pupils continue to enjoy their work and write for an increasing range of purposes. This is often helpfully linked to topic work and a range of visits. This has helped to increase pupils' motivation, particularly that of boys, to write, and pupils accurately recounted visits to the local museum, a wildlife park and to Chatham dockyard. The quality of their writing increases as pupils move through the school, although younger pupils in Years 1 to 3 still find some simple words difficult to spell accurately. Other children, however, are gaining in confidence to spell longer

words. This reflects their increased confidence to sound out letter combinations following the increased focus on teaching basic letter sounds and combinations since the beginning of term. Pupils are confident to talk with adults, readily recounting what they like about the school. They are also willing to speak in front of a wider audience, such as when Year 6 presented an assembly of 'through the decades' to fellow pupils and parents. While most were happy to share their thoughts about the Second World War or the pop culture of the 1960s, some were relatively quiet when addressing the audience. Parents and pupils alike enjoyed their rendition of 'Yellow Submarine', which was sung with enthusiasm. Pupils' reading skills are also developing more rapidly as revised systems to make reading more exciting and motivational are beginning to take further effect. Pupils in Year 2 and 6 read with confidence but, as importantly, they are very motivated to complete their books so they can move on to their next choice. They readily recalled their favourite authors and favourite types of books.

Pupils' mathematical abilities continue to improve and pupils through the school now cover a wide range of mathematical ideas and problem-solving activities as well as more routine number work such as learning times tables. This is helping to increase their ability to use numbers more confidently. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoyed learning simple counting skills to 10 using practical activities to help them understand the idea fully. Although most pupils needed the apparatus to check their answers, one or two were just beginning to see simple patterns in their answers so they could work out the next one 'in their head'. Older pupils regularly practise calculating simple problems, such as combinations of football scores or the outcomes of rolling differing numbers of dice. Number skills are a regular feature of mathematical work and, in the main, this is helping pupils at lower and middle ability to gain confidence in their number and calculation skills. However, sometimes pupils of higher ability are not fully stretched in their learning as they often start activities at the same level as all pupils, rather than starting at a higher level to really challenge their thinking.

Those pupils with special educational needs are making improved progress as they are supported well within normal class activities and sometimes in adjacent spaces outside of classrooms, where they benefit from small-group activities or one-to-one help. In the latest national tests they reached levels which were comparable to other similar pupils nationally.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection:

- Raise pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in English – good.
- Urgently accelerate pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in mathematics – good.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has continued to improve since the last monitoring visit and more lessons now contain essential ingredients to make pupils' learning more meaningful and fun. Lessons now universally have clear aims for what pupils are expected to learn and many, but not all, involve children in deciding simple ways of judging their success within the lesson. Older pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 benefit from having detailed targets for improvement and many recognise how to improve their work as the lesson progresses so that they can get to a higher level. Younger pupils also have targets, but these are sometimes overly long and they are not always as clear about how to use them to guide their efforts.

A very focused and far-reaching approach to teaching letter sounds and combinations this term is starting to help pupils become more confident in reading and spelling unfamiliar words. Children in the Reception classes are particularly benefiting from a very clear and systematic approach in teaching letter sounds, and novel ideas like having the class robot 'gobble up' the chosen sound when identified also help to motivate children's learning.

Activities are now better matched to differing abilities for the majority of pupils, where those with special educational needs and those of lower and middle ability are catered for well. Those pupils of higher ability often have extra challenges to increase their learning, although sometimes it is only after they have started at a similar point to other pupils. This often reduces the time they have to tackle the more difficult challenge. More activities are being planned which relate to pupils' interests, such as recent visits to a local supermarket. Sometimes, however, opportunities are missed to either remind pupils about how their skills can be used in day-to-day life, or to base the activities on some simple 'real-life' exercises so pupils can see how their skills can be useful to them beyond school.

Teachers' marking is an increasingly positive and consistent feature found within pupils' books. Comments are usually a good combination of praise for good work and simple pointers to help pupils know where they must improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils report that they continue to enjoy school and that they have noticed a change in the way the school is helping them to learn and enjoy lessons. For example, the recent appointment of a play leader has helped to make access to play equipment easier and pupils are appreciative of the efforts to make playtimes more enjoyable. Pupils also say that playtimes are safe, that bullying is a rare occurrence and that the school helps them to feel safe. This has been aided by the installation of new security gates to the school. Around the school in corridors and at lunchtime pupils behave well, often helping each other if needed. Extra-curricular activities help extend and broaden pupils' interests, while breakfast and after-school clubs provide

a valuable resource for parents, and which pupils say they enjoy attending very much. Not surprisingly, attendance rates have improved over time as pupils increasingly enjoy attending. The school is conscientious in ensuring any absences are followed up.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The head and deputy headteacher continue to steer the work of the school effectively and recent changes in staffing are helping secure the quality of teaching through the school. Recent appointments, such as the Reception and Key Stage 1 leader, who was also responsible for the teaching of phonics, and the Key Stage 2 phase leader, are starting to give other staff more direct access to advice and support when needed. It is also ensuring that teachers remain accountable more directly to their phase leaders for progress of pupils in their class. Checks on the pupils' progress are carried out six times during the year so that any in danger of underachieving are spotted early. In this respect, teachers have an increasing understanding of progress within their own class and of the school in general. A range of training has covered topics including how to improve quality of teaching, phonics teaching and Year 2 testing arrangements. Training has also extended to teaching assistants to increase their effectiveness in supporting pupils in class. Teachers and teaching assistants have been matched up in order to form 'study pairs' where teachers and teaching assistants give each other feedback every fortnight about how well they think pupils are progressing in the classroom and what might be helping or hindering their progress.

Senior leaders continue to work closely with governors who have specific responsibilities in overseeing different aspects of the school. The new Chair of Governors is a regular visitor who is contributing effectively in helping the headteacher and senior staff shape the direction of school improvement. Governors regularly record the outcomes of their visits so they can gauge progress on key aspects identified in the previous inspection. They ensure that checks on health and safety, including staff vetting procedures, are carried out conscientiously, and the upgrading of site security has aided pupils' staff and parents' sense of safety within the school. Governors are increasingly aware of how finance is directed, particularly the additional funding known as the pupil premium. Although governors have a working knowledge of where the money is allocated, they have not yet fully developed routines to check if the money spent for those pupils entitled to extra funding is helping them make enhanced progress.

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

- Improve leadership and management – good.

External support

The local authority continues to give the school good support through arranging various forms of training and on-site support for individual teachers and senior leaders. Links with local schools, known as the Deal Primary Learning Alliance, along with links with an effective school further away, have helped senior leaders arrange for teachers to observe the work of others, and they benefit from joint training and in sharing effective practice between schools.