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14 December 2012

Mrs Margaret Henshaw
The Headteacher
Gatten and Lake Primary School
Howard Road
Shanklin
Isle of Wight
PO37 6HD

Dear Mrs Henshaw

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Gatten and Lake Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 and 13 December 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.

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 the Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Russell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' achievement, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5, by:
 - improving pupils' spelling, grammar and punctuation
 - improving pupils' handwriting and presentation of work
 - improving pupils' ability to read and understand word problems in mathematics and their application of skills to solve these.
- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5, by:
 - strengthening the quality of teachers' marking so that pupils understand how they can improve their learning
 - strengthening pupils' understanding of their individual targets for literacy and numeracy
 - making it clear what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of lessons.
- Ensure that pupils are confident that behaviour is dealt with consistently and fairly by all staff.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by ensuring that leaders and the governing body monitor pupils' performance and the quality of teaching rigorously.

Special measures: monitoring of Gatten and Lake Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 December 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and a sample of pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, members of staff, parents, members of the governing body, a local authority representative and groups of pupils.

Context

Two teachers left the school at the end of the summer term and were replaced by two new teachers who joined in September.

The governing body's powers (called its delegated powers) were suspended when the school was placed in special measures. A local authority officer is currently acting as the Chair of the Governing Body. Delegated powers will be returned in January 2013 and a new Chair will be appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils across the school are increasingly achieving more because teaching is improving. Pupils' spelling, punctuation, grammar, handwriting and presentation are all improving, as are their mathematical skills.

Year 2 pupils who took national assessment in the summer reached higher levels than those who took them last year. Results were average. The school's first group of Year 6 pupils took national tests in the summer. Their results were slightly below average because many pupils made slow progress during Years 3 to 5, particularly in mathematics. This was particularly true of some groups of pupils, for example boys, lower ability pupils, pupils eligible for additional government funding (the pupil premium) and pupils with special educational needs.

Pupils' achievement is checked carefully each half term. Most pupils made reasonable progress during the early part of this term and some made good progress. However, progress is still quite variable across year groups, subjects and groups of pupils. Leaders are aware of this variability and are working to reduce it.

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

- raise achievement, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5 – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has improved considerably over the past term and a significant amount is now good. No inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection.

Lessons are now more interesting, with ideas and activities that motivate and enthuse pupils more. There are also more opportunities for pupils to discuss things with each other. Pupils now often do slightly different activities in lessons, more closely matched to their individual levels of ability. Teachers explain things more clearly. They also check more carefully to ensure that all pupils are making progress during the lesson. These improvements are all helping pupils to achieve more.

However, a few lessons move too slowly and pupils then make less progress than they could. This sometimes happens because the teacher talks for too long at the start of the lesson; pupils then have too little time to practise and try things for themselves. In less effective lessons, work is often too easy for some pupils. For example, in some mathematics lessons pupils have to work through too many easy questions before they get to ones that challenge them.

Teachers now routinely explain to pupils what they want them to learn during the lesson and what they would expect to see in a good piece of work. This can help pupils to make quicker progress and produce better work. However, teachers often make too little reference to these things during the rest of the lesson. The potential value is then lost.

Teachers' marking has improved significantly. Teachers mark work regularly using the school's common system. Pupils have a better idea of how to improve their work. However, some teachers do not always check to ensure that pupils respond to their comments. The way in which teachers set numeracy and literacy targets for individual pupils has improved this term: targets are now more precise and are reviewed more regularly.

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

- improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5 – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils generally behave very well. They concentrate and work well on their own and with each other. Pupils say that there is still occasional misbehaviour in lessons and in the playground, but that this is not common. Teachers respond to any misbehaviour consistently and fairly. The school has done a lot of work on bullying this term. Pupils recognise the value of this and say that any bullying incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils' attendance was low last year. Staff have employed a range of successful strategies, such as working more closely with the parents of pupils who are frequently absent. As a result, attendance is much better this year.

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

- ensure that pupils are confident that behaviour is dealt with consistently and fairly by all staff – good.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher is providing clear and very effective leadership. She has a thorough, accurate and realistic understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school is now improving rapidly, but senior leaders realise there is still more to do to increase pupils' level of achievement. Good plans are in place to support further improvement.

The headteacher observes lessons regularly. Her feedback to teachers is rigorous, precise and thorough, and it provides them with valuable guidance about how to improve their teaching. She sometimes takes classroom teachers with her when she observes lessons across the school. This is very valuable because it helps them to think critically about their own teaching and enables them to pick up good ideas from other teachers.

The work of the other leaders in the school is developing well. They are more involved in checking the school's work. They have, for example, analysed samples of pupils' work to identify areas for improvement in individual teachers' practice and common weaknesses across the school. This has been done rigorously and has been very valuable. Leaders are beginning to take a more active role in monitoring the quality of lessons. They are currently observing lessons jointly with the headteacher to check the accuracy of their judgements, before taking a more extensive role in lesson observation next term.

The governing body is now more secure and will resume its full powers in January 2013. Good plans are in place to support this transition. Governors are more involved in monitoring the school's work and they have a better understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

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

- improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by ensuring that leaders and the governing body monitor pupils' performance and the quality of teaching rigorously – good.

External support

The local authority has provided very valuable support to the governing body. It has provided additional governors who have helped to develop the skills and expertise of other governors. It has also provided other useful support, for example to develop mathematics teaching.

The school's improvement is monitored and supported by local authority officers and by inspectors from a neighbouring authority who have been commissioned to undertake this work. Their reports now focus more sharply on the key areas for improvement identified in the last full inspection report. There is also a better distinction between activities undertaken to monitor and check the school's progress and those carried out to support its development.