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25 January 2013

Ms Elizabeth Caldwell
Headteacher
New Road School and Nursery Unit
Bryant Street
Chatham
ME4 5QN

Dear Ms Caldwell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of New Road School and Nursery Unit

Following my visit with Barbara Saltmarsh, Additional Inspector, to your school on 23–24 January 2013, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed. One newly qualified teacher 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Medway.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Knowles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2011

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders provide relevant and timely information to the governing body so that governors are better prepared to challenge and interrogate performance, and so make informed decisions
 - making sure that middle managers are proactive and rigorous in their roles, have a clear focus on pupils' progress and are held more to account by senior leaders
 - ensuring that the senior team maintains an overview of all that happens in the school and a much sharper insight into pupils' learning and progress.

- Enhance the rate of pupils' progress, especially in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
 - improving the systems for tracking pupils' learning so that underachieving individuals and groups are identified quickly
 - intervening promptly to support pupils who are falling behind in order to raise attainment.

- Raise the quality of teaching to 75% good or better by July 2012, by:
 - providing a pace of teaching that is rapid enough to secure a good pace of learning for pupils in each class
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information effectively to pitch work at the right level to challenge all pupils in their class
 - improving the consistency of good marking and use of targets in order to ensure that all learners know how they can improve.

Special measures: monitoring of New Road School and Nursery Unit

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 23–24 January 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed 13 lessons, scrutinised documents and met informally with some parents and carers as they dropped off their children in the morning. They also met with members of staff, the Interim Executive Board, two representatives from the local authority and a group of pupils from Key Stage 2.

Context

Both teachers working in Year 1 left the school in December. Due to a late resignation, only one vacancy has been filled. A permanent replacement teacher for the other class will be joining the school in April 2013.

Achievement of pupils at the school

There has been a significant improvement in the rate of progress for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in the two Reception classes. This is because adults now work with small groups of children to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills each morning. These mini 'lessons' are sharply focused on the children's next steps in learning. The adult leading each group listens to and observes the children very carefully so that they can assess how well the children have understood and whether they are ready to move on to the next stage. Systematic teaching of letters and the sounds they make (often known as phonics) in Reception and Key Stage 1 helps pupils to tackle unfamiliar words and is improving their fluency when reading.

Elsewhere in the school, teachers' assessments from the end of the autumn term indicate that pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years. School leaders have scrutinised this information in detail. Their analysis shows that the vast majority of pupils are on track to make at least the expected progress this year. Work in pupils' books indicates that many have already made good progress, including most of the pupils who are learning English as an additional language. However, there is still some variation in progress between different groups of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2. For example, pupils who are eligible for free school meals tend to make less progress than their classmates. School leaders are monitoring these variations carefully.

Inspectors judged pupils' achievement to be good in about half of the lessons seen during the monitoring inspection. In the lessons that required improvement to be good, the higher-attaining pupils generally had work with the right level of challenge, and pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs were well supported. However, other groups of pupils found the work too easy or did not achieve well because the work was too hard for them.

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

- Enhance the rate of pupils' progress, especially in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics – good

The quality of teaching

The teachers who joined the school last term are now an established part of the staff team. Less-experienced teachers have grown in confidence and all staff, including teaching assistants, have higher expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Teachers consistently plan topics that are appealing to pupils.

The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage has greatly improved. Records from the headteacher's visits to lessons show that there is now more good teaching across the school. The pace of lessons is now usually brisk. In all the lessons seen during the monitoring inspection, teachers structured the learning well. No time was wasted. Teachers made sure that the introduction to the lesson explained the learning and then allowed time for pupils to work independently to practise their skills. They deployed teaching assistants effectively to support those who needed extra help.

Work in pupils' books confirms that they have plenty of opportunities to write in a range of subjects and that there is now a real purpose for writing. In mathematics, they regularly practise using mathematical concepts, but still do not get to apply their skills to solve problems very often. Teachers continue to mark pupils' work thoroughly and generally give good guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve. Teachers do not always ensure that they give pupils time in lessons to respond to the marking and make corrections.

All teachers know the level that each of their pupils is working at. Some still do not use this information well enough when planning lessons. This means that the work set is not always matched precisely to the pupils' needs and leads to uneven progress over time.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to 75% good or better by July 2012 – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All teachers have good working relationships with their pupils. Pupils are interested in their learning and usually work hard in lessons. Low-level disruption is now rare. Teachers expect pupils to settle quickly to their work in lessons and pupils respond well. Most maintain a good level of concentration when working independently. Pupils are courteous to adults and move around the school sensibly.

The school's pastoral support team helps to ensure that pupils feel safe in school and that families whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive advice and help. The behaviour mentor, who joined the school in September, works closely with the small number of pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour and are at risk of exclusion. This has enabled these pupils to stay in school and continue their learning.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The leadership capacity in the school has grown. The three phase leaders (those responsible for different year groups) and the new deputy headteacher have increased in confidence and expertise over the last term. The headteacher now has a strong team to support her in the drive for further improvement. The deputy headteacher has developed her skills in analysing information on the school's performance. She has also visited classrooms to see how well disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported. She records and checks the progress of pupils who receive additional support outside the classroom to ensure that these extra activities are effective and provide good value for money. The phase leaders attend the regular meetings with teachers to review pupils' progress. This means that they have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their phase and know what needs to be done to improve. They have drawn up well-focused action plans and review these regularly.

The subject leaders for English, mathematics and science are also developing their skills in analysing the performance of pupils. They have worked alongside the headteacher and other senior leaders to check teachers' planning and pupils' books, and are gaining the confidence to undertake this work alone.

The Interim Executive Board continues to give strong support to the headteacher and her team. Board members are kept extremely well informed by the headteacher's reports on progress and all attend review meetings with the local authority. The plan for the handover to an elected governing body is on target. The process of recruiting staff and parent governors will begin later this term. It is envisaged that the handover will take place in September.

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

- Improve the leadership and management of the school – good

External support

The support provided by the local authority to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been very effective. The adviser has worked alongside the phase leader and her staff team to raise expectations of what young children can achieve. She has supported the introduction of new ways of working. The impact on outcomes for children is already clear to see.

The tailored support for the three phase leaders has also had a considerable impact on building the leadership capacity in the school. The local authority is gradually reducing its support as the school's capacity grows.