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Mrs G Webb
Headteacher
Telscombe Cliffs Community Primary School
Telscombe Cliffs Way
Peacehaven
BN10 7DE

Dear Mrs Webb

Special measures monitoring inspection of Telscombe Cliffs Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 2013, 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 which 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 which took place in October 2012.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff, the joint Chairs of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated. Other documents, such as assessments of pupils' progress, were considered.

Context

There have been no major changes in the school since the inspection.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher, supported well by her deputy and the assistant headteacher, have taken appropriate and committed action since the inspection. They have accepted its outcomes and are applying local authority advice suitably. They have refined and sharpened several school systems. Management structures are better organised to deal with the key issues the school faces. Phase and year leaders are contributing more fully. Performance management of staff is appropriately structured. Job descriptions have been refocused. The use of pupil premium funding is better evaluated.

The school analyses data about how well pupils are attaining in English and mathematics increasingly well. This shows that, in the current Year 6 cohort, there is a 'tail' of pupils whose attainment is below expectations. This means that high quality teaching is especially needed in classes with Year 6 pupils. Data from the other year groups shows improvement, especially at Key Stage 1. The school's score in the 2012 Year 1 phonics screening was notably above average. This tests pupils' ability in linking letters and sounds.

Lesson observations are now carried out more frequently by senior staff. The written records of these are evaluative, showing what is working well and what can be better. However, the wording is not always sharp enough. In some cases, improvement recommendations are imprecise. Nevertheless, the suggested improvements are beginning to be checked on more quickly and thoroughly.

Local authority consultants are used suitably; their input is carefully managed so that they provide support to staff where it is most needed but without this becoming overwhelming.

The local authority's action plan is well constructed and effective. It dovetails suitably with the school's existing improvement plan. Key points from the local authority's plan have been sensibly adopted by the school into its own documents. The school's plan is due to be re-published in April. Senior staff know that, to leave special measures, the school needs to take back responsibility from the local authority. They know that the school's new plan should include precise and demanding targets for outcomes for pupils; actions and milestones towards these; clear accountability for all activity; suitably rapid timescales; information about funding of the actions; monitoring and evaluation details; and the involvement of governors.

Plans written by middle leaders, for individual subjects, are useful but at an early stage of implementation. Teaching resources are organised well in many subjects.

Middle leaders are not yet held accountable for pupils' attainment in their areas of responsibility. However, the subject leaders for English and mathematics have usefully presented information about how well pupils are doing in those subjects to staff.

The governing body has accepted the challenge presented by the inspection report. It recognises that governors have not been sufficiently challenging but instead too tolerant when the school has moved forwards too slowly. Past visits by governors to the school were constructive but not focused on checking improvement. Governors are now increasingly aware of their essential role. The joint chairs of governors are actively learning, taking advice and usefully becoming more involved in local networks. An experienced member of another school's governing body has joined. Governors are seeking to improve their grasp of school data and the quality of teaching. They understand the need for greater capacity at senior staff level and are working with the local authority and headteacher to appoint a second deputy headteacher. They will rightly be contributing to the monitoring group for the school organised by the local authority.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

The school may appoint up to two newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. No more than one may work in Key Stage 2.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the joint Chairs of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector