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Mrs Libby Banks
Redhill Primary School
Wrights Avenue
West Chadsmoor
Cannock
WS11 5JR

Dear Mrs Banks

Special measures monitoring inspection of Redhill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 March 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 November 2012.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two further governors, a representative of the local authority and a local leader of education. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

There continue to be significant staffing issues at the school. Currently, four newly qualified teachers are working at the school, on contracts or on a supply basis. Of the teaching staff, only the Year 1 teacher and Year 6 teacher/deputy headteacher, the headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator plus 2 other teachers

who are on long term sick leave are full time permanent postholders.. On March 1 2013, the school's status changed. It became a Foundation school, with trust status; part of the Chase Co-operative Learning Trust

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders and managers accept the special measures judgement and are determined to improve the school's position. However, leadership and management remain fragile. The school secures considerable support from the local authority and from the Trust which it has recently joined but this has resulted in too many external agencies supporting the leaders, carrying out significant pieces of work of competing priorities. Disagreement exists between the headteacher and some of those brought in to support the school about the most effective way forward. This lack of coordinated response is reducing the impact of any support and limiting the potential for improvement.

Governors remain committed to the school but still lack the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles appropriately. They are due to undertake local authority governor training later in March 2013. Governors are aware of their statutory duties and they are prepared to support the headteacher in the management of staff performance. However, despite the school having a wealth of data about the progress made by pupils, this is still not presented in an easily accessible form that all governors can understand. For example, at the request of HMI, on the day of the inspection the school quickly produced figures for the proportions of pupils in Key Stage 2 whose reading ages are below their chronological ages. Using figures from September 2012, 59% of pupils in Key Stage 2 have reading ages below their chronological ages and, in the current Year 6, the figure is 71%. Tackling this reading deficit is the most urgent priority for the school.

The school's action plans and class reviews, drawn up by the headteacher, are not clear enough or simple enough to support the very inexperienced four newly qualified teachers, and temporary staff. For example, there is no clear policy or system for teaching reading in Key Stage 2, based upon the needs of pupils, and this is a major contributory factor in the decline of English standards over time from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. Given the fragility of staffing and the inexperience of most staff, it is imperative that leaders, governors and those supporting the school ensure that guidance to teachers is clear and straightforward. Governors and the Trust have a duty of care towards the newly qualified teachers and should make sure that they receive all the support they need.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. The impact of local authority support is reported to have been positive in parts, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but limited elsewhere. However, the local authority's statement of action does not provide enough information about how it will ensure the school moves to good as quickly as possible. In addition, the statement does not make clear how the school will be supported to raise standards in reading.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose. Too many initiatives are planned, in too short a period of time, which distract the school's focus from overriding priorities, such as improving reading in Key Stage 2. Too many external agencies are involved, resulting in some confusion and loss of clear leadership from the headteacher and governors.

The school may not appoint any more newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. Governors should seek to maintain stability in staffing for the foreseeable future.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire and the Chair of the Chase Co-operative Learning Trust. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington
Senior, Her Majesty's Inspector