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3 May 2013

Mr Graeme Garthwaite
The Interim Headteacher
Cage Green Primary School
Cage Green Road
Tonbridge
TN10 4PT

Dear Mr Garthwaite

Special measures monitoring inspection of Cage Green Primary School

Following my visit with Barbara Saltmarsh, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 May 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 previous monitoring inspection. Please pass on my thanks to all those governors who attended the feedback meeting.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

As discussed during the monitoring inspection, one newly qualified teacher may be appointed to the Reception Year **or** Key Stage 1.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good by:
 - making sure that lesson activities extend and challenge all pupils, especially those of higher ability
 - creating frequent opportunities for pupils to work independently, especially in applying their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
 - making sure that teachers quickly identify pupils who are falling behind in their work so they can be given extra help to catch up
 - making sure that pupils know what they are expected to learn in lessons and are clear about whether they are reaching their targets.
- Ensure that all pupils make good progress in mathematics, reading and writing by:
 - providing training for teachers so they are effective in teaching these subjects
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to practise their mathematics skills
 - making regular checks about how quickly pupils are learning letters and sounds.
- Ensure that leaders and managers are effective in tackling the school's weaknesses by:
 - tracking pupils' progress so that those falling behind are identified quickly and given extra help to catch up
 - making self-evaluation rigorous and accurate.
- Ensure that governance is effective in driving improvement by:
 - providing training for governors so they can hold senior leaders and staff to account for the achievement of different groups of learners
 - making certain that governors play a full role in analysing the school's strengths and weaknesses and deciding on priorities for improvement.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 May 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, consultant headteacher and other key staff; a group of governors including the Chair of the Governing Body; and a representative from the local authority. They spoke informally with staff and pupils during the course of the inspection and looked at the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, the school has appointed two new members of staff. One has joined the main school and a new leader for the centre for autism – renamed and re-launched as The Phoenix Centre – has been appointed. In addition, a member of staff on long-term supply is covering a teacher on maternity leave.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Information from teachers' current assessments of pupils' levels of work shows some variation in their rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There are differences between the progress of groups of pupils: those in different year groups and classes; boys and girls; those who have special educational needs and those that do not; and those who are eligible for free school meals and those who are not. In part, this patchy picture is a remnant of previous underachievement and, in part, reflects some concerns about the accuracy of the previous assessments on which this information is based. Nonetheless, pupils' progress has stalled in Years 3, 4 and 5 and is not picking up as quickly as it needs to. The information from teachers' checks on pupils' progress does not entirely match the quality of teaching and learning seen by the school's leaders and during this monitoring inspection. Hence, there is more to do to unpick this apparent difference so that by the next monitoring inspection the school can demonstrate that better teaching is helping all pupils to catch up.

By contrast, the school's information shows that pupils in Years 1, 2 and 6 are making at least the progress they should and, in many cases, are making good progress. Here, the school's information fits more closely with the quality of teaching and learning seen. Pupils are broadly on track to reach the levels of attainment set as targets in the school's action plan by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Of note is the proportion on track to reach the higher levels of attainment, Level 3 and Level 5, respectively. Those in Year 6 are on course to meet the targets set for the amount of progress they make from the end of Year 2 until the time they leave the school.

As was the case at the inspection in October 2012, children in the Reception Year make good progress across all areas of learning. Here, children develop important

personal qualities that underpin future learning, such as the ability to listen to others, work alongside them and share resources. They are also making significant gains in the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics that will help them make the transition to Year 1.

In the lessons observed, the quality of pupils' learning was dependent on the quality of teaching and, in particular, on the level of challenge provided in the activities; this was especially so for those pupils who are capable of reaching higher levels of attainment. Training for staff to improve their subject knowledge in mathematics and phonics (the relationship between the way that letters are written and the sounds they represent) has taken place and more is planned. The school has made changes to the way that reading is taught and has placed greater emphasis on teaching pupils in Years 3 to 6 about spelling, punctuation and grammar as well as the features of different styles of writing. Occasionally, pupils' learning is held back because pupils do not have enough time in a lesson to apply what they have been taught to their own writing.

The quality of teaching

Training for teachers has focused on a number of key features for successful teaching and learning, which senior leaders expect to see in teachers' everyday practice. In the main, teachers work hard to follow the new planning format and to include these agreed features in their teaching. However, despite teachers' efforts to adopt these features, some variability in the quality of teaching remains for several reasons. Lesson planning is often detailed and teachers endeavour to modify activities for pupils of different levels of ability. Invariably, lessons have clear aims and simple criteria to help teachers check that pupils have been successful in the lesson. However, pupils end up doing very similar work where the aims and hoped-for outcomes are the same for all pupils. Where teachers mark pupils work against the expected outcomes, they sometimes miss important gaps in pupils' understanding. Not all teachers use what they know about what pupils can do already to make sure that the tasks they set are hard enough to challenge pupils capable of achieving more. Put simply, teachers' expectations are not always high enough. Some teachers are not confident enough to start pupils off at different points; this means that more-able pupils end up doing simpler work before reaching the more challenging work that would stretch their learning further.

There are some positive features in teaching to celebrate and build on. Without exception, relationships between teachers and pupils help to create an environment in class that is conducive to learning. By and large, teachers provide stimulating activities that make links to pupils' previous learning and capitalise on their enthusiasm and natural willingness to learn. Careful management and organisation ensure that good use is made of all the adults in the class; teaching assistants are well directed and clearly briefed by teachers so that they can contribute to pupils' learning. In the Reception Year, regular assessments and detailed records of what

children know and understand are used effectively by teachers and support staff to plan a wide range of new and challenging experiences. There is much in the practice here that could provide a model for the rest of the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are positive about their learning. They are biddable so that, even when activities are not exciting, they persevere and, in the main, sustain a good level of concentration and effort. They listen attentively to their teacher's instructions. Some know their targets and have a clear sense of their own achievement, whilst in some lessons pupils are not always clear about their learning because they are not sure what the end product will be.

Pupils' conduct around the school and their behaviour towards each other is commendable. Pupils are well mannered and polite to visitors. Attendance is broadly average and pupils arrive on time. There have been no exclusions from school since January, which is a considerable improvement on the previous year.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Much work has been done to review and refresh policies through which senior leaders set clear and high expectations for improving the quality of teaching. Regular lesson observations and feedback to teachers tell them what to do to help pupils learn more. Importantly, there is a culture developing which encourages teachers to be reflective; they want to improve and are keen to build on the feedback they receive. Systems for checking the progress pupils make have improved. A thorough analysis of the progress made by different groups of pupils that might be vulnerable to underachieving helps to ensure that additional support can be put in place as necessary. Such analysis is highlighting the differences in rates of progress made by different groups and raising discrepancies between pupils' progress and the quality of teaching observed. Each teacher has been set targets to increase the progress made by the pupils in their class.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the school's improvement plan has been re-worked, with support from the local authority to align it more closely with the authority's statement of action. It now has a much sharper focus on making sure that actions have the desired impact on improving pupils' attainment and progress. As such, it is a helpful tool in checking what is, and is not, working and that the school is going in the right direction. Senior leaders are developing the skills of other leaders who are still new to their leadership roles and have much to learn. The leaders of learning have devised actions plans for their area of responsibility and carried out some sampling of pupils' work. So far they have focused mostly on checking that teachers are complying with agreed policies, such as having learning objectives, rather than checking that there is evidence that pupils are making enough progress. This is their next step.

Parents have noticed the changes that are taking place in the school. The results of Parent View, the Ofsted on-line questionnaire completed or updated during this monitoring inspection, were more positive than at the time of the inspection in October 2012.

Governance is improving rapidly. Under the leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, governors have undertaken an audit of their skills and are devising an action plan which identifies where their own practice needs to improve. There is more to do to ensure that **all** governors are involved in monitoring the outcomes of the school's action plan. Nonetheless, governors are beginning to ask challenging questions about the information they receive from the interim headteacher, including about his analysis of the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils. They are beginning to find out more about the school's strengths and weaknesses from their own visits to school rather than being totally reliant on information from the interim headteacher. The large number that attended the inspection feedback reflects governors' commitment to the school's improvement.

External support

The local authority is highly responsive to the school's needs. It provides a wide range of support to improve the quality of teaching, both directly and through arranging partnerships and collaboration with other local schools. Termly meetings provide robust challenge and hold the school's leaders accountable for the school's progress. Although it is too early to see consistent impact in the quality of teaching and learning, the authority's support is having clear impact on securing senior leadership and improving governance.