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Natasha Sandland
Pear Tree Community Junior School
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Dear Ms Sandland

Special measures monitoring inspection of Pear Tree Community Junior School

Following my visit with Jan Connor, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 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.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Derby.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - lessons proceed quickly and teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are high
 - teachers spend less time telling pupils what they have to learn and that they provide more opportunities for them to learn things for themselves
 - work provided is matched closely to pupils' different abilities so it is neither too hard nor too easy
 - best practice in teaching is shared within the school.

- Improve behaviour by ensuring that:
 - a clear behaviour policy is agreed and consistently applied by all staff
 - the school promotes positive relationships and respect between pupils
 - all incidents are logged and that all the actions taken are effective and followed up.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making expectations of good teaching clear to all staff
 - developing and applying thorough and accurate systems to check the quality of teaching
 - giving teachers clear targets for improvement and checking that these are achieved, ensuring the interim executive board checks that all groups of pupils are making good progress regularly.

- Promote the importance of attendance to pupils and parents so rates rise to at least the national average.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 May 2013

Evidence

We observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the assistant headteacher, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has resigned and the assistant headteacher has become the acting headteacher. One teacher and one teaching assistant have resigned and a temporary teacher has been appointed for the summer term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The acting headteacher and leadership team are improving the ways in which data are collected and pupils' progress tracked. However, teachers are too reliant on the use of tests to assess pupils' levels of attainment. As a result, assessments are not fully reliable and teachers are unsure about pupils' achievements. The school's current data indicate that pupils are not making enough progress and, in many cases, they are falling further behind with their learning. Pupils across the school are not beginning to catch up on previous underperformance because teachers are unclear about the next steps pupils need to take in their learning and too much weak teaching prevails. As data are unreliable, this is hampering the school's efforts to use assessment information to secure improvement. There is very little analysis of how groups and cohorts are achieving.

Leaders carry out termly pupil progress meetings to look at the progress made by all pupils. However, this information is not used carefully enough to ensure that it helps pupils to make better progress. Data show pupils do not make enough progress in lessons. This is because activities are not challenging enough and expectations placed on pupils are not explicit enough. Pupils generally show perseverance to complete tasks and their attitudes to learning are positive, but this has not accelerated their progress. Assessments held by the school indicate that attainment by the end of Year 6 will decline from the previous year and will be below the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

The quality of teaching

Leaders hold an overoptimistic view of teaching and, during the inspection, too much weak teaching was observed. As a result, pupils' are making insufficient progress and underperformance remains. There has been little success in providing support to improve the quality of teaching and, as a result, the quality of provision is still

inadequate. However, some effective teaching was observed during the inspection. Here, pupils' needs were met well and teachers knew what pupils needed to achieve. Teaching assistants were used well and they enabled pupils to access their learning. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils' misunderstandings were rectified by the sensitive use of appropriate and well-targeted questioning.

Most lessons seen during the inspection were judged to be either inadequate or to require improvement. This is because expectations of what pupils could achieve were not high enough and the activities did not meet the needs of the learners. Learning outcomes were not explicit and pupils were unclear about how to be successful. Questions did not probe pupils' understanding sufficiently and individual needs were not catered for as well as they might. Teachers spent too long telling pupils what they need to learn and, as a result, pupils did not have enough time to complete the work or learn for themselves.

Marking of pupils' work is too variable across subjects and classes. In some books, pupils are guided to the next steps in their learning, but, in most cases, pupils are praised for their efforts and are given little support on how to improve. Pupils take too little care about how they present their work and their presentational skills are poor. Teachers do not sufficiently encourage pupils to present their work to a high standard.

Pupils have targets for reading, writing and mathematics, and most pupils are aware of the National Curriculum level at which they are working. However, little reference is made in lessons to their targets and, as a result, these do not support pupils' learning or progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour has improved because leaders have developed appropriate behaviour management strategies. These are consistently applied by most staff across the school. Pupils are encouraged to behave well. 'Stop racism, we can all be friends' is a regular message seen around the school on posters designed by pupils. Pupils speak confidently about anti-bullying weeks and they say there is less fighting and name-calling as a result.

A new behaviour policy has been agreed by staff and the IEB and, as a result, incidents of poor behaviour have reduced. Parents and carers feel more confident that their child is safe and looked after well. All incidents of poor behaviour are now logged and regularly reviewed by school leaders.

Attendance is improving because leaders have developed strategies to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. There is better engagement with parents and carers on the importance of attending school. Absence rates are regularly monitored

and action is taken when pupils do not attend. However, attendance rates remain low.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The leadership of the school has changed significantly since the last monitoring inspection. The acting headteacher is working hard to make a difference but there is a lack of clarity and rigour about what is needed to bring about change and, as a result, the areas of weakness are not been tackled quickly enough.

Monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out by the acting headteacher and the assistant headteacher in liaison with external support. While lessons identify strengths and weaknesses, these evaluations are not rigorous enough and are not suitably focused on raising pupils' achievement. A range of monitoring activities is carried out but, to date, this is not helping to improve teaching or raise pupils' outcomes. For example, learning walks are not focused enough or reported on. Furthermore, pupil progress meetings do not clearly state what teachers are going to do to help pupils catch up with their learning.

Leaders provide information to the local authority and the IEB on pupils' achievements. However, there is a lack of confidence in the information and, as such, board members do not receive accurate accounts of the standards pupils attain. This restricts the IEB from holding senior leaders and staff to account or being able to check progress. Due to a lack of understanding about how groups are achieving, there is a lack of focus of how successful the school's actions are and a lack of knowledge of what to develop next.

Subject leaders are not in place for essential aspects of the curriculum. This is leading to a lack of progress in key subject areas. Furthermore, a lack of training is hindering key staff to be effective in moving their subjects forward. For example, the leader for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has received no support or training in how to lead this vital area of the school.

The IEB is skilful and knows the challenges that the school faces. The Chair is frustrated by the lack of progress in key areas of weakness and all members are working hard to hold leaders to account. They have taken on specific areas of responsibility and they are increasingly monitoring the school's actions.

External support

The local authority has been instrumental in supporting the IEB to resolve staffing issues. Officers from the local authority are reviewing the school's performance as well as providing a range of support. This includes the behaviour support team working with teachers, education welfare guidance, supporting the work of the newly qualified teachers and facilitating a link with local good schools.