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7 June 2013

Mrs S Deacon
The Executive Headteacher
Westwood Farm Junior School
Fullbrook Crescent
Tilehurst
Reading
Berkshire
RG31 6RY

Dear Mrs Deacon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Westwood Farm Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 6 June 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 February 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection I met with you, members of the interim executive board (IEB), and representatives of the local authority. I also had a telephone conversation with the chair of the IEB. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans, and scrutinised aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Context

Since the previous inspection the headteacher has left the school and you, as headteacher of Westwood Farm Infant School, have been appointed interim executive headteacher of both schools. The local authority has begun the planning necessary to operate the schools as a hard federation. A deputy headteacher has also been appointed and has taken up post, and the school improvement board established in the autumn of 2012 has become the IEB.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You and your new deputy headteacher are leading the school with considerable energy and passion. You are using your knowledge of the pupils to raise expectations and begin the process of driving up pupils' achievement. You have used the previous inspection, and your knowledge of the school, to identify the precise issues that need to be tackled to bring about the necessary improvements, and you have made a strong start in many areas.

- You have reviewed the quality of teaching in the school and accurately identified key aspects that need improving. This information is now summarised usefully in each teacher's training plan.
- The training in the use of assessment, organised for early in the autumn term, is a good first step in a re-structured whole-staff training programme.
- You have clarified the way in which pupils' work is marked and this policy is now being enforced across the school. This means that teachers now give feedback to pupils in a consistent way, allowing you to plan and implement strategies to help pupils to respond to this feedback productively.
- Pupils' individual targets in reading, writing and mathematics, although still largely generic, are now much clearer to them and to their teachers. The school's achievement monitoring systems have been improved significantly. They now give important information about groups' and individual pupils' progress, and signal the need for any intervention or support more quickly and reliably.
- Lessons now have clearly stated learning intentions; these are helping pupils to understand what is expected of them, and to measure their own progress. The quality of lesson planning is starting to improve because teachers are beginning to focus on pupils' learning rather than activities.
- An audit of teachers' phonics (the sounds that letters and combinations of letters make) knowledge and teaching skills has been undertaken. As a result, well-targeted training has been scheduled for all staff. The progress-tracking system used in the infant school to identify every pupil's developing phonics skills has been adopted. This helps staff to make intervention and support more focused, and to speed up pupils' progress towards reading and writing well.
- Your analysis of the differences in achievement of girls and boys in Key Stage 2 outcomes last year has not yet revealed any underlying reasons for any gap to exist, and you will continue to monitor girls' achievements very closely.
- You and the members of the IEB are keenly aware of the potential for pupils who are eligible for free school meals to underachieve. You are in the process of associating pupil premium funding with specific support activities to ensure that these pupils make good progress.
- Problems around the leadership of subjects are being addressed with appropriate urgency. You have already appointed a seconded assistant headteacher for September 2013 who is a mathematics specialist. Some other subjects lack leadership, but you have plans in place to improve this.
- Significant shortcomings in performance management systems in the school are being addressed quickly. All teachers' targets have been reviewed since the previous inspection, and the IEB has already re-written the performance

management policy and has established procedures to enforce it, including a pay committee and an appeals board.

- You are keen to involve more parents in supporting their children's learning. Links with parents are already much better; several offered practical support following the recent inspection, such as expert assistance in the library, and help with pupils' guided reading. Parents have responded very positively to your appointment and to the work of the IEB to improve provision in the school.

The local authority is giving the school strong and effective support. This includes:

- establishing the IEB from the existing school improvement board, and ensuring that it consists of people with relevant and strong expertise, for example in the analysis and presentation of performance information, supporting pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, and strategic governance
- assisting with the secondment of the deputy headteacher immediately after the previous inspection, and her subsequent permanent appointment, and the secondment of an assistant headteacher from September
- supporting improvements in the teaching of mathematics
- providing additional support and consultancy for leadership and management, and to develop the quality of teaching (especially in mathematics and phonics).

The local authority is monitoring the school's response to this support very closely by undertaking a series of short visits to gauge progress. It is scrutinising progress against the good quality action plans in formal progress meetings every six weeks, and at school improvement management board meetings every eight weeks.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made.

- The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.
- The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and the Director of Children's Services for West Berkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector