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20 June 2013

Mrs C Wapshare
Acting Headteacher
Beechview School
Guinions Road
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP13 7NT

Dear Mrs Wapshare

Special measures monitoring inspection of Beechview School

Following my visit with Gail Robertson, additional inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 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 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed to the school.

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 Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

Accelerate pupils' achievement by improving the quality of teaching in all classes by:

- raising teachers' and other adults' expectations of what pupils can achieve through planning work that is sufficiently challenging and well matched to the needs of all groups of pupils
- ensuring teachers make more regular and accurate assessments of pupils' learning and use the information to plan lessons which help all pupils reach higher levels of attainment and make faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- introducing consistent ways for teachers to assess pupils' progress during lessons, and to use this information to modify activities and tasks accordingly
- ensuring that teachers do not talk for too long in lessons so that pupils can work more quickly at tasks by themselves and complete more work in their books.

Improve the behaviour and safety of pupils by:

- ensuring that the work interests the pupils, and that they are actively involved and concentrate well
- improving the way pupils' behaviour is managed so that disruptions are not tolerated and pupils know they should use adult support to resolve any bullying issues
- improving provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- ensuring that the playground is more orderly and offers a secure place to play.

Improve leadership and management by:

- ensuring leaders urgently increase the pace of improvements with robust plans and clear, measurable targets which are checked frequently for their impact on pupils' achievements
- making sure leaders with specific responsibilities identify the correct areas to improve, plan actions and check on their impact in order to improve pupils' learning in their subjects
- implementing a thorough programme for checking the quality of teaching and learning, including scrutinising planning, observing lessons, talking to pupils and reviewing their work ensuring that teachers' assessments and the school's data give a regular and accurate view of how well pupils are doing
- improving systems for managing the performance of staff so teachers meet the

expected professional standards and are held to account for how well pupils achieve - taking steps to eliminate all inadequate teaching and providing any necessary training ensuring pupils' challenging targets are met because teachers know what pupils need to do to

- improving the approach to teaching reading so pupils are more enthused to read and have better skills which they can use in all other areas of their learning.

Improve the effectiveness of governance through ensuring the governors:

- gain a better understanding of the performance of pupils and require leaders to halt the declining pattern of pupils' underachievement, provide a relentless challenge to school leaders in holding them to account for improving the quality of teaching and learning, and the behaviour of pupils in lessons, and check the impact of their decisions about the spending of the pupil premium funding more carefully.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18–19 June 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a group of pupils, parents and carers, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and representatives from the local authority. The inspection focused primarily on pupils' behaviour, the quality of teaching, and leadership and management.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the position of the acting headteacher has been clarified and a number of staffing matters have been resolved. The interim Executive Board has now been established. Considerations are underway about the school becoming an academy. Uncertainties surrounding staffing, leadership and the establishment of the Interim Executive Board have hampered the school's ability to press on rapidly with improvements.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The day-to-day progress of pupils has improved because teaching is better. However, pupils have large gaps in their learning because they have not made the expected progress in previous years. The overall achievement of pupils is below what is expected because their key skills have not been developed adequately or securely. Pupils are making the best progress in reading. Girls are performing better than boys. There is a large gap between the achievements of pupils who are in receipt of the pupil premium (additional government funding) and other pupils, who do better overall. Although teaching has improved, not enough pupils are yet making accelerated progress to ensure that that it is better than expected and that gaps in learning are closed.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving. No inadequate lessons were observed during the inspection. Assessment has improved. Teachers have a better knowledge about how to accurately check the levels that pupils are reaching in reading and writing, and this is helping them to more accurately plan activities to meet the needs of pupils. It has also improved the overall consistency of assessment across the school.

Teachers are managing behaviour well. There are clearer guidelines which are understood by teachers and pupils. This means that disruptive behaviour in lessons is much less frequent, and as a result, learning is not disrupted. This helps pupils to make better progress. The calmer lessons mean that there are more uninterrupted opportunities for pupils to give answers and put forward ideas and views. This helps pupils to learn more effectively.

Although teachers plan appropriate activities, lessons are not always expertly managed to make the best of the opportunities for pupils to learn. Teachers' explanations sometimes lack clarity, and the challenge to different groups of pupils, although better managed, is not always as effective as it should be to help pupils of different abilities learn equally well.

Teachers regularly mark pupils' work. This works best when there is a written 'dialogue' between the teacher and pupils, and an expectation that pupils will respond to the comments.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour of pupils has greatly improved since the last section 5 inspection. Incidents of serious misbehaviour have fallen. The school has a calm atmosphere. Pupils said that behaviour had improved, a view supported by most parents and carers who spoke to inspectors. During the inspection, all lessons were calm, as was assembly and breaktime. This contributes positively to more effective learning. Pupils say that rules are clear and sanctions are fair. The better behaviour makes a strong contribution to pupils' social and moral development.

Pupils' attitude to learning is mostly positive. However, they do not always show an urgency to get on with tasks and teachers do not consistently check this during lessons.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The leadership and management of the school has improved. The uncertainty about leadership posts, which arose during the months immediately following the section 5 inspection, seriously delayed a concerted start to improvement activities. This means that the actions taken have not had long enough to have the anticipated impact required to move the school quickly to becoming good or outstanding. The acting headteacher has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She has been relentless in improving the school's practices. Despite the effective support from a consultant headteacher, the acting headteacher still carries a considerable burden of tasks, without a 'well-defined' senior leadership team, in order to maintain the momentum of improvement which has now started in earnest. The Interim Executive Board is newly established. It has the expertise that is needed to help move the school forward but it is too early to judge its impact.

Teaching has improved because there is much more rigour in the way its quality is checked. A more robust performance management process for all staff will start at the beginning of the new school year. The analysis of pupils' progress is more accurate and this means that it is now possible to have in-depth discussions with teachers about the progress of individual pupils. This close analysis is leading to a clearer picture of where the gaps are in pupils' learning. Appropriate steps have been taken to improve the teaching of reading and writing. A consistent approach to teaching phonics is being developed and there is more accurate assessment of the levels that pupils are reaching in reading and writing. The school has also correctly identified that pupils' achievements in mathematics need significant improvement and that this must go hand-in-hand with improvements in English.

The school has correctly focused its attention on the most vulnerable pupils, especially those who have statements of special educational needs. A more rigorous approach is ensuring that the requirements of each statement are now fully met.

The school's own survey of parents' and carers' views shows that most are positive about the changes and improvements at the school. Most parents and carers who spoke with inspectors were very happy with how their children were getting on. Some said that the school had given very good additional support to their children when it was needed. The small number of views expressed on the online 'Parent View', and some comments made directly to inspectors, show that there are some parents and carers who are not happy with the leadership of the school and feel communication is not effective.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide effective strategic support which has helped to expedite complex staffing matters, establish the Interim Executive Board and pursue the issue of academy status. Other support to improve teaching and curriculum areas has helped to move the school forward, but the impact has not yet secured rapid improvement.