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12 September 2013

Mrs Helen Headleand
Headteacher
Bramley Sunnyside Junior School
Flanderwell Lane
Bramley
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S66 3QW

Dear Mrs Headleand

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bramley Sunnyside Junior School

Following my visit (with Keith Bardon, Additional inspector) to your school on 10 and 11 September 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 January 2013. 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.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Strategic Director, Children & Young People's Services for Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013

- Eliminate inadequate teaching and improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 to good or better in mathematics and English in order that pupils make at least good progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers keep their introductions to lessons brief so that pupils are more active and attentive in their learning
 - teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are going to learn and know what steps they need to take to be successful
 - teachers’ questioning skills are developed further so that they can fully probe and challenge pupils’ knowledge and understanding
 - teachers’ expectations are raised so that pupils produce and present high quality writing in all subjects
 - teachers are given the opportunity to observe good and outstanding practice and learn from it
 - teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support pupils’ learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management and the school’s capacity to improve by:
 - developing the skills of the subject leaders so they can be fully effective in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects in order to raise pupils’ achievement
 - ensuring that all school action plans are specific about what the final outcome will look like and include interim measures within an agreed timeframe, so that governors and other leaders can rigorously monitor the progress made
 - ensuring that lessons across a range of subjects offer real-life opportunities that meet the needs and interests of all pupils, particularly those known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

- Improve the effectiveness of governance by:
 - ensuring governors receive training so they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and can help to drive school improvement very quickly
 - developing governors’ understanding of the school’s data so they can ask challenging questions and hold leaders to account
 - involving governors in deciding the allocation of pupil premium funding and monitoring its impact.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10 to 11 September 2013.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

A newly appointed assistant headteacher started in September 2013. In addition, a teacher who left has been replaced by two part-time teachers.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Provisional national data indicate that, in 2013, Year 6 pupils gained better levels of attainment in mathematics and reading. However, attainment in writing was similar to 2012, despite the fact that this Year 6 group had started with higher levels of attainment in Year 3. In writing, the progress made between Year 3 and Year 6 was less than in 2012. In reading, a similar proportion made the expected levels of progress as in 2012. Rates of progress increased significantly in mathematics due to improved subject leadership and better teaching of mathematics in Years 5 and 6. However, a low percentage made more than expected progress in reading, writing or mathematics.

The school's recent analysis of pupils' progress indicates that, over the last year, all year groups made the expected amount of progress in reading. These data also show that in the last year, Year 5 and Year 6 made more rapid progress in writing and mathematics. For Year 6, this was not enough to overcome previous underachievement in writing. In Year 3 and Year 4, pupils made slow progress in writing and mathematics, due to weaknesses and discontinuity in teaching. Recent changes in staffing and staff development are beginning to improve teaching and learning in Year 3 and Year 4.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has started to improve as a result of staff changes, the targeted support for individual teachers, the introduction of common approaches to planning lessons and more effective staff development. Inadequate teaching has been reduced but not eradicated. Much teaching continues to require improvement. More teaching is good.

The teaching of mathematics improved in Year 5 and Year 6 as a result of leaders showing teachers how to improve. Stronger guidance has been provided about what to teach and when and, teachers have a stronger awareness of different ability groups when planning mathematics lessons. Teachers are more knowledgeable and confident about teaching the skills of using and applying mathematics which has resulted in more problem-solving activities and open-ended questions. Teachers more often check pupils' understanding to ensure pupils know what to do. Work for different levels of ability is better planned and more practical resources and activities are helping pupils to learn mathematics better.

Staff are becoming more reflective about their teaching and are assessing what worked each day in order to plan the next lesson. The approach to marking has become more consistent with clearer identification of what pupils have done well and what they need to improve. Teachers more regularly provide pupils with opportunities to respond to marking at the beginning of the lesson. Increasing use of peer assessment is giving pupils a better opportunity to reflect on and improve their writing. In some teaching the amount of teacher talk has been successfully reduced and pupils now move more quickly into better planned and better resourced activities. In some cases, teaching assistants have a stronger role in leading the learning of small groups as well as supporting individuals.

In weaker teaching, staff are still talking too much when introducing lessons. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities for practical activity, early in the lesson, to engage their interest and focus their attention. On occasion, this contributes to inattention. In these lessons, teaching assistants are not used early enough to lead different ability groups in their learning. Teaching is not always pitched at the right level for different groups and teachers sometimes make assumptions about what pupils know and understand without sufficient checking. This sometimes leads to pupils working too slowly. The teaching of handwriting is improving because the school has adopted a common approach and pupils are supported by line guides for their writing. This is not applied consistently with the result that some writing by older pupils is poorly formed and presented. In some English teaching, learning objectives do not match the task precisely enough with the result that pupils are not sufficiently clear about how to achieve success in their writing. On occasion, opportunities are missed to show and explain examples of expressive writing to demonstrate the features of language that are being taught.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In the few lessons where teachers continue to talk too long, pupils' behaviour continues to require improvement. In these cases, pupils are not involved quickly enough at the beginning of the lesson in sharply focused practical activity and they are passive for too long.

The school is working more proactively with external agencies to identify and tackle the special needs of pupils with more challenging behaviour. This has led to changes in provision and plans for increased support which are at an early stage of implementation.

Pupils welcome the new rewards system introduced this term. The previous emphasis on negative consequences for misbehaviour has been balanced by tangible rewards for positive behaviour. Pupils appreciate the greater levels of consultation about the privileges they can gain through good behaviour.

In 2013, attendance was a little lower than the previous year but remains above the 2012 national average. The number of fixed term exclusions was at the same level for the last school year as the previous year.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher's skilful leadership and communication has been instrumental in initiating change and increasing the pace of improvement. She has improved the culture of the school by providing clear direction and strong encouragement for staff to improve teaching and learning. A team approach has been developed with better-defined roles and responsibilities for senior and middle leaders. Staff feel more valued and are more willing to take initiatives. The deputy headteacher has been successfully enabled to develop her role as leader of mathematics which has improved teaching and achievement in Years 5 and 6. Further work is planned to strengthen the teaching of mathematics in the current Year 5 as well as in Years 3 and 4. The new subject leader for English has drafted an action plan and has begun to take greater responsibility for staff development and monitoring. The use of assessment data to identify the progress of individuals and groups has started to improve. Actions to accelerate the progress of pupils capable of fast progress are planned.

Weaker teaching has been improved by making staff changes and placing teachers on short-term support plans. A number of teachers have been on development programmes that have involved observation of good teaching in other schools. A few staff have not had sufficient opportunities to observe good practice in English. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have led staff development activities and taught alongside staff in the classroom to introduce new ways of doing things and to coach weaker teachers. Inadequate teaching has been reduced. A focus on moving teaching requiring improvement to good is a priority.

More opportunities for pupils to learn through first-hand experiences through topic-related visits and work outdoors are increasing enjoyment in learning and enhancing pupils' experience and understanding. Teachers' planning of these experiences to develop particular subject skills and knowledge is not always thought through with enough rigour and detail.

The headteacher has improved the environment of the school which is appreciated by pupils and provides a more ordered and positive context for learning. Relationships with parents have continued to improve because senior leaders are more visible and approachable and the different responsibilities of senior staff have been communicated more clearly.

The school action plan was formally evaluated by the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body and the plan for the current school year sets out appropriate actions and targets. The governing body has continued to improve under the leadership of the new Chair who provides clearer direction and purpose. An open and transparent relationship has been established with the headteacher which promotes dialogue and enquiry. A small 'Standards Committee' has met regularly to monitor the progress of the school. Governors attended a range of training activities in the summer term which has improved their ability to analyse data and ask questions. The Chair of the Governing Body has enrolled on a national training programme for Chairs of Governing Bodies which is providing useful insight into the work of governing bodies in the wider region. Governors are more involved in monitoring the impact of the pupil premium and are seeking a more detailed cost-benefit analysis of different types of support and intervention.

External support

The local authority provides good support for leaders in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The local authority English consultant has provided effective support for the new literacy coordinator in drafting an action plan, developing staff training and understanding of data. The consultant for mathematics has provided an effective sounding board for the leader of mathematics. Good support has been provided in auditing the provision for pupils with special needs and in extending the range of provision. The school has benefited from training and development provided by local schools.