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11 October 2013

Mrs Libby Banks
Redhill Primary School
Wrights Avenue
West Chadsmoor
Cannock WS11 5JR

Dear Mrs Banks

Special measures monitoring inspection of Redhill Primary School

Following my visit with Morag Kophamel, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 October 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 third 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.

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 Anna Halliday, the Commissioner for Education and Wellbeing for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington

Her Majesty's Inspector, Senior

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and use what they already know about pupils to set demanding work
 - teachers advise pupils on how to make good progress in lessons
 - teachers tell pupils what to do to improve, and make sure pupils act on this advice, when marking work
 - teachers check pupils understanding throughout lessons and correct any misunderstandings straight away
 - support staff are used effectively in class to support pupils' learning
 - topics interest boys as well as girls and give all groups of pupils opportunities to develop their ability to work on their own without help from the teacher
 - pupils have more opportunities to practise reading and writing across all subjects.

- Improve the behaviour of pupils and reduce the number of exclusions by:
 - using the school's behaviour policy consistently
 - giving pupils interesting and relevant activities in lessons so that they want to learn
 - providing planned opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in lessons.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that senior and other leaders implement the headteacher's vision for the school
 - ensuring that teachers with leadership responsibilities understand how data can be used to identify where there are weaknesses in provision and take action to help colleagues improve their teaching
 - checking regularly that actions taken are having the expected impact on how well pupils are doing
 - holding staff to account for increasing rates of pupils' progress over time through rigorous management of teachers' performance.

- Ensure that the governing body checks:
 - whether the Pupil Premium funding is used effectively to make a difference to raising standards for eligible pupils
 - how well the performance of teachers is managed and linked to their salary progression.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 October 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents including minutes of governing body meetings, behaviour and incident logs, safer recruitment records, data on progress made by pupils and various policy documents. They met with the headteacher, pupils, a group of parents and carers, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, a representative from the Co-operative Learning Trust, representatives from the local authority and the Education Welfare Officer.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, governors have appointed a new Chair of the Governing Body. The Co-operative Learning Trust has seconded a deputy headteacher to work with the headteacher while the recruitment process is underway for the appointment of a new substantive deputy. In addition, recruitment for a new appointment to the leadership team is underway. A new leader of behaviour for learning has been appointed. There are currently three newly qualified teachers (NQT) employed by the school, two of whom are due to complete their NQT year at the end of the autumn term.

At the end of August 2013, extensive building works began on the site, the beginnings of a completely new building for the school. This work is due to be completed in the summer term 2014.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment remains low overall but there are clear signs of pupils making better progress in some subjects in some year groups.

The unvalidated results for the 2013 national tests for eleven-year-olds show that the proportions of pupils gaining Level 4 or above in mathematics rose to just below the national figure but fell in reading. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 in writing in the teacher assessments was similar to the figure in 2012. In the new national test for grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) over half of pupils met the required standard compared with nearly three quarters of pupils nationally.

Evidence from lesson observations and pupils' books confirms the continuing picture of wide variability in the quality and standard of pupils' work. Teachers pay too little attention to promoting pupils' basic skills across all writing activities. As a result pupils also give insufficient attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar in their written work. They do not routinely check their work to edit and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar errors, mainly because they are not taught to do so. This aspect of writing does not have a high priority. Instead, teachers focus too much on

other objectives such as identifying similes or the features of particular genres of text, even for pupils for whom this work is well beyond their capability or need. Even the writing of more able pupils, for whom such work would be appropriate, is hampered by their inability to write clearly using simple spelling, grammar and punctuation well. The balance between these two aspects of writing needs to be redressed.

Too often, the writing in pupils' books jumps about and pupils do not spend enough time mastering the skill of writing in one genre, for example a story or letter, before moving on to another. Some pupils' books show that within the space of a week or few days, they are required to write in, four or more genres and are not given enough time to master any one style completely.

Pupils' work also reveals long-standing gaps in their skills and knowledge which are not picked up by subsequent teachers. For example, many pupils in Key Stage 2 have significant gaps in their phonic knowledge (letters and the sounds they make) which are revealed in poor spelling and also in their reading. However, the school does not have a system to identify these pupils and help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need.

At the beginning of the school year, the school assessed the mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding of all pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 using a commercial, nationally standardised test. The results are stark. In each year group, the overwhelming majority of pupils are performing at a level below or well below the average for that age group. In Year 6, 73% of pupils' mathematics knowledge and skills are below and well below average. Armed with a much clearer picture of pupils' attainment, the school has introduced a raft of changes to the teaching of mathematics. One of these is a daily computer mathematics session to support pupils individually. This programme is paying dividends. Inspectors observed Year 1 pupils log onto a computer, complete a session and log off again independently within 15 minutes. All pupils worked at their own level. One or two were completing shape work normally undertaken by Year 2 pupils. The next day, in a good mathematics lesson, the same class was observed working on a range of number activities. The least able were counting out items to 10, others were taking away one from numbers more than ten and another group were completing sums involving subtracting single digits from numbers greater than 10. Teachers' greater clarity about where pupils are up to, and the subsequent better match of work, is leading to pupils being more productive in lessons and learning more.

In Key Stage 2, many more pupils are able to explain the value of digits, for example the three in 437 or 396. Pupils in Year 6 can quickly, mentally calculate 197 multiplied by 10 or by 100 and explain what happens to the digits. They can also calculate 97 divided by 10 or 100 and explain what the decimals are. For the vast majority, this is new learning. Since the start of the academic year, the work in mathematics books is neater, of a higher standard and there is more of it. Most

pupils can explain what they are doing when they undertake column addition or subtraction; they now routinely use the inverse operation to check their working out and use the correct technical vocabulary.

The changes made to the way in which reading is taught across the school are becoming embedded and, as a result, pupils' reading skills are developing apace. Pupils are establishing good reading habits. The vast majority bring their reading bags to school each day. They each read daily, the younger pupils have two reading books each – one a phonically decodable book. They are reading many more books than previously and are building reading stamina. In two good guided reading sessions in Years 3 and 4, inspectors observed pupils quietly engrossed in their books, reading undisturbed for almost 30 minutes. Some were reading books by Michael Morpurgo, Anne Fine or from the Horrid Henry collection and others simple phonic texts. All could explain what they were reading. Pupils talk positively about their reading; some now have favourite authors and complain if their reading is disturbed by other pupils talking.

In the 2013 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments, results for reading and writing were considerably lower than average but higher than average in mathematics. In this boy heavy cohort, the boys performed significantly less well than the girls. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonic check was higher than the national figure but whereas all those pupils not eligible for free school meals reached the standard, only half of those eligible did so.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are benefiting from a good start to early reading. At this point in the school year, inspectors observed children to be enthusiastic lovers of books, with some already reading simple texts. This cohort of children is further on than the previous cohort at the same time last year.

The quality of teaching

The professional development that teachers and assistants have been undertaking, the revised planning formats, the agreed 'non-negotiables' in classroom practice, and the new policies for teaching specific subjects are all beginning to bear fruit. The quality of teaching is slowly improving but it remains too variable. More good teaching and less inadequate teaching was observed during this inspection than on the previous monitoring visit. The most effective teaching was observed in some guided reading sessions and some mathematics sessions where teachers had:

- used the data now available to them on pupils' attainment to match books or work well to their stage of development
- very high expectations of how pupils would behave in the lesson, how hard they would work and how much work they would complete.

The key factor holding back the quality of teaching is its variability: often the same teacher delivers a good lesson then delivers a less effective one. Marking is improving except in writing books where the marking focuses almost exclusively on the features of a writing genre.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspectors observed only good behaviour in lessons and around the school. This is a significant improvement on the position at the time of the section 5 inspection. The new behaviour policy is clearly having a positive impact. It is consistently applied in all classes. It is simple to understand, and the behaviour boards are visible and clear in classrooms and in the hall. The school now has up-to-date behaviour and incident logs; however, these still lack the detail that would make monitoring sharper and more secure. No discriminatory behaviour has been recorded for the current year. Six incidents of bullying have been recorded since September but it is not possible to compare this figure with the same period last year.

Attendance remains lower than the national average. The school has been very proactive in promoting and celebrating attendance and good punctuality. The school's attendance drive has not been popular with all parents and carers but it is beginning to have a positive impact. On both days of this inspection, pupils arrived to school and lessons promptly.

Persistent absence remains very high: more than 12% compared to the national figure of just over 3%. The school has identified a number of children whose persistent absence is a cause of grave concern, several of whom are known to the care agencies. When the school-home worker and Education Welfare Officer chase up non-attendance at a child's home, they are not always allowed to see the child, raising concern about his or her safety and welfare. As a matter of urgency, the school, the Education Welfare Service, the local authority and the Co-operative Learning Trust need to take a more pro-active and determined role in pursuing the persistent absence of these vulnerable children, some of whom may be safer at school than at home.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The inadequate judgement at the previous monitoring inspection appears to have galvanised school leaders and governors. The pace of change since July 2013 has been dramatic. There is a greater sense of urgency about the work being undertaken and also a much stronger team spirit. The headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and members of the governing body are united in their renewed focus on pupils' standards. The headteacher and governors have taken some difficult staffing decisions and a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed. The new appointment to the leadership team is having a positive impact. Inspectors

observed this teacher leading a regular planning session for other teachers. A newly qualified teacher explained that he finds these sessions very useful.

The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have ensured that staff are fully aware of the 'non-negotiables' that must be present in classroom displays and in teachers' planning for specific subjects. New policies have brought consistency to classrooms and to ways of teaching; for example, staff have agreed how teachers must explain addition or how they must expect pupils to present their work. Senior leaders' expectations of staff are much clearer. Leaders monitor teachers' day-to-day performance against the agreed policies and 'non-negotiables', and against the progress that pupils make.

New appointments have strengthened the governing body. The acting deputy headteacher seconded by the Co-operative Learning Trust has had a significantly positive impact on the school, bringing expertise and strength to support the headteacher.

External support

The local authority is monitoring the school closely and has held strategic meetings with the headteacher and governing body about the future strategic direction of the school, including possible academisation. The local authority has emphasised the urgent need to raise standards.

The acting deputy headteacher will leave the school before the end of the autumn term and, until an equally strong, substantive replacement is appointed, the school's leadership capacity will be reduced and its progress possibly jeopardised.

The school needs the support of the local authority to appoint a strong, substantive deputy headteacher and senior leader to replace those leaving the school.