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8 November 2013

Mrs Claire Wapshare
Headteacher
Beechview School
Guinions Road
High Wycombe
HP13 7NT

Dear Mrs Wapshare

Special measures monitoring inspection of Beechview School

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 November 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 not making enough 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 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
- check the impact of their decisions about the spending of the pupil premium funding more carefully.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 November 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, parents and carers, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, there has continued to be a number of staffing matters to resolve. This has led to an unexpected high turnover of teachers including one post at senior level. This has meant that some classes have had a number of teachers since the start of the term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The latest unvalidated analysis of information from the 2013 Year 6 national tests shows that the school failed to reach government targets for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics. The school's own analysis shows that too few of the current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach the levels they should do in this academic year.

Pupils' progress in reading remains the strongest area of improvement. Achievements in writing and mathematics continue to be areas of concern because progress in these subjects is still not rapid enough. Scrutiny of pupils' books and lesson observations show that too many pupils do not achieve enough in lessons and this means that any progress made is not building systematically and securely towards the levels that pupils should be achieving. Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged and other pupils are not closing rapidly enough.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is not improving rapidly enough in all parts of the school. The improvements in teaching seen at the last monitoring inspection have been maintained in Year 5 and Year 6 where there has been greater continuity of staffing. Overall there is still not enough high-quality teaching across the school to secure the good and rapid progress that pupils in all classes need to raise the level of their work and close the gaps in their learning that have accrued over time.

Teachers are beginning to plan a wider range of work to match the needs of different groups of pupils. However, there is still a way to go to ensure the tasks set for pupils are at an appropriate level of difficulty and suitably challenging in order to help them learn effectively in every lesson and move learning on quickly.

Teachers are developing their expertise in asking pupils more probing questions during whole-class sessions. This is helping pupils to think more carefully about what they are learning and also helps teachers to know how much pupils understand. Good relationships and teachers' high expectations help to ensure that pupils are attentive in lessons especially during whole-class discussions.

The work planned by teachers however, does not always lead to good learning. Sometimes teachers and teaching assistants are not precise enough in their explanations and vocabulary they use, because their subject knowledge is not strong enough, for example in mathematics.

Lesson observations and scrutiny of books show that pupils do not consistently complete enough work in lessons or over time. In some lessons teachers and teaching assistants are not checking to see that all pupils are fully engaged with their activities. There are examples of very good partnerships between teachers and teaching assistants, for example, in one lesson observed the teaching assistant modelled and recorded pupils' answers on a board while the teacher continued to probe understanding with a range of different questions.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Improvements in behaviour have been maintained since the last monitoring inspection. This has a very positive impact on the 'climate' of the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good.

Parents and carers who spoke with the inspector confirmed that behaviour had improved. Pupils move around the school sensibly, are well behaved in assembly and are mostly attentive in lessons, where they are willing to work on the tasks that their teachers set. Behaviour in lessons only slips where teaching is less engaging and pupils begin to 'switch-off' and achieve less than they should. Pupils have responded well to the recently introduced reward system, for a wide variety of achievements, and are keen to gain the awards available.

Staff have high expectations of behaviour to which pupils respond well. Their good behaviour has a positive impact on the quality of learning because, in the better lessons, where teachers ask pupils more probing questions, pupils have an uninterrupted opportunity to answer in depth and clarify their thinking.

A small group of older pupils who spoke with the inspector said they felt safe and were not concerned about bullying. They welcome the wide variety of backgrounds of their fellow pupils and could not remember any incidents of racism or a lack of tolerance of views and attitudes of others. Pupils demonstrated a high level of courteousness at all times.

Although pupils' attitudes to school are positive, attendance overall is too low, especially for some older pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable to falling behind with their learning.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher remains very focused on raising the quality of education but she continues to be hampered in her ambitions because of difficulties in recruiting a full complement of permanent teachers. This has made it difficult to develop and improve teaching quality consistently across the school, though initial improvements seen at the last monitoring inspection, demonstrated by longer serving staff, have been maintained.

The continued lack of an experienced senior leader, such as a deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher, to take on some day-to-day leadership duties leaves the headteacher with a heavy burden of tasks. This reduces the amount of time she has to concentrate on monitoring the work of the school, developing staff skills and leading the drive to improve teaching and raising pupils' achievements.

Middle leaders (those responsible for specific aspects of the school), new to their roles are keen to develop their skills and increase the impact they have, but they have not yet been enabled to undertake any significant professional development to enhance their management capabilities. They also have little time to work alongside colleagues to provide support.

The quality of teaching is regularly checked through the headteacher's and local authority's formal and informal lesson observations. Scrutiny of the work in pupils' books and the analysis of information from the assessment of pupils' progress are also becoming part of the school's regular procedures to check the quality of learning. However, the outcomes of these activities are not yet brought together effectively or efficiently to create crisp short-term targets for teachers to improve their lessons and raise pupils' achievements. The written reports from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work do not focus enough on what needs to be done to improve pupils' learning.

Information about what parents and carers think about the school from the online questionnaire 'Parent View' and through discussion with the inspector shows that there is growing support for the school. Parents and carers say that although they are sometimes concerned about a lack of communication from the school, they agree that both the headteacher and class teachers are very approachable if they have concerns.

The Interim Executive Board is still in its early stages of development. It has successfully introduced a number of procedures and a committee structure to carry out its duties. It is beginning to gather first-hand information about how well the

school is doing and to challenge the headteacher about the performance of pupils. While its members have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, the board has not yet had significant impact on quickening the pace of improvements. Discussions with prospective academy sponsors are proving to be drawn-out and inconclusive and this is hampering strategic planning for the long-term direction of the school.

External support

The Buckinghamshire Learning Trust has continued to provide strategic support and help with staff appointments. A consultant headteacher continues to provide helpful on-going support for the headteacher on both administrative and educational matters. Other officers monitor the school's progress, provide specialist support and are represented on the interim executive board. However, this range of support, while proving effective in the early stages when the school was placed in special measures, is not now having enough impact in accelerating the rate at which the school is improving.