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2 December 2013

Kathryn Simmons  
Headteacher  
Bradfield CE Primary School  
Cock Lane  
Bradfield Southend  
Reading  
RG7 6HR

Dear Mrs Simmons

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Bradfield CE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 and 28 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 December 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, the Director of Children's Services for West Berkshire and the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Alison Storey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2012**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to good and eradicate inadequate teaching by:
  - improving teachers' subject knowledge
  - ensuring teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensuring they always set hard enough tasks for all pupils, including the most able
  - ensuring that lessons start promptly, lesson introductions are not overlong and pupils are moved quickly on to the main task
  - improving the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 and helping pupils to apply their knowledge of phonics when spelling.
  
- Ensure more pupils reach average and higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 by:
  - improving pupils' handwriting, punctuation and spelling and the way pupils present their work in books
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces and to write for different purposes
  - giving the least-able pupils in Key Stage 1 opportunities to read every day
  - providing training for teachers to enhance their skills in teaching mathematics
  - ensuring play activities in the Reception class are purposeful and promote children's skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring all leaders and managers share high expectations for pupils' achievement and are more accountable for the school's performance
  - ensuring teachers who are in charge of subjects play a full part in checking pupils' performance, raising achievement and improving teaching
  - developing the curriculum so that teachers can teach the basic skills systematically, and so that it includes increased challenge for more-able pupils.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of governance by ensuring governors:
  - have a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils
  - challenge school leaders by holding them robustly to account for the school's performance
  - carefully check the school's performance and the impact of spending, including the pupil premium funding, on pupils' achievement
  - make sure teachers' pay is linked to the quality of their teaching.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 27 and 28 November 2013**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, executive headteacher and other key staff; the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB); representatives from the local authority and the diocese; and a local leader in education. She talked informally with pupils during lessons and at break times and looked at the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).

### **Context**

A national leader in education has supported the school as executive headteacher for the equivalent of two days per week since July. Two specialist leaders in education from her school are also providing support and the local leader in education's support has been refocused on mathematics. The deputy headteacher left at October half term; an assistant headteacher has been appointed from within the staff for the remainder of the school year. Two teachers have left and three have joined the school since the last monitoring inspection.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

There were pockets of improvement in the standards pupils reached in reading, writing and mathematics by July, compared with the previous school year. In particular, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level of development at the end of the Reception Year was higher than the national figure. More than twice as many pupils reached the expected level in phonics (the sounds that letters or combinations of letters make) at the end of Year 1. Again this was higher than seen nationally. There were also improvements in reading, writing and mathematics standards at the end of Year 6. The proportions of pupils leaving the school at the expected level in reading and writing, and higher levels in reading and mathematics were above national figures.

However, the picture is not consistent across the school or subjects. Given that pupils' starting points are typically higher than those for their age more pupils should be exceeding the expected levels. The improvements seen at the end of Year 2 were not enough to bring standards up to the expected level, let alone exceed them. The proportion of Year 6 pupils making reasonable progress reaching the expected levels in mathematics and in spelling, punctuation and grammar was no better than the national figure. While pupils reach and often exceed expected levels in reading, too many started the new school year at levels below those expected for their age in writing. Standards in mathematics are not as high as they should be given pupils' abilities.

Senior leaders' analysis of pupils' progress over time shows that progress is less variable, although they acknowledge it may not be as good as it seems given concerns about the accuracy of some assessments last year. They have looked at the achievement of different groups and have rightly identified that some boys do not achieve their potential, particularly in literacy. The information for other groups, such as disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, or those eligible for free school meals is not analysed in sufficient detail. While it is evident that these pupils are not doing as well as others, it is not clear whether additional funding for interventions or extra support are helping to close the gap over time.

It is early days, but the school's analysis of recent checks on pupils' levels in reading, writing and mathematics shows signs of progress in each class since September. Pupils have better attitudes to learning and the work in their books shows improvement, particularly in the quantity, quality and presentation of their writing this term. In the better taught lessons observed it was clear that pupils were gaining skills and knowledge.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching observed recently by the headteacher and the two headteachers providing leadership support, and during the monitoring inspection is less variable than it was last school year. Inadequate teaching is now rare and there are pockets of good practice, but not enough teaching is of the consistently good quality needed to improve pupils' achievement.

Teachers are focusing more on what pupils should be learning rather than what they will be doing in lessons. They are getting better at sharing the purpose of the lesson with pupils, checking with them what they have learnt at the end and using this to adapt the next lesson. The questions teachers ask pupils are becoming more challenging. They are more likely to encourage pupils to explain their reasoning or think how they can improve their work. However, teachers do not always allow enough time for pupils to respond or make sure that all pupils, particularly boys, are fully involved. Where teaching assistants understand how to support and challenge pupils they make an effective contribution to lessons, but this is not consistent across the school. Teachers are using marking and feedback more effectively to let pupils know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. This is better in writing than in mathematics where they do not routinely identify what the next steps are. Occasionally, teachers give pupils opportunities to respond to marking to improve their work but this is rare.

Pupils' writing is improving because a more structured way of teaching has been introduced. The new approach helps teachers to plan to develop pupils' writing skills over time. Pupils are taught to prepare and plan their work and to write for different purposes. They have regular opportunities to write longer pieces and are expected to present their work well. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters or

combinations of letters make) is generally better than at the last monitoring inspection because teachers are more focused on what pupils need to learn rather than what they will do. There are still some weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics. Teachers do not all have the depth of subject knowledge needed to pinpoint exactly what pupils should be taught next. They do not always teach pupils how to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems or how to record their findings in different ways.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' behaviour around school and at break times remains a strength of the school. Their good relationships with each other and staff help to create a calm environment where rules can be low key. There is a more purposeful atmosphere in lessons than at the last monitoring inspection. Better teaching is encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. They know that sometimes they will have to work without adult support and at other times they will be expected to work in small groups with each other. When pupils are clear what is expected of them they settle quickly and apply themselves well to these tasks.

The school's updated guidance for parents and carers makes it clear what is an acceptable reason for absence and what is not, and what time pupils should be in school each morning. The number of days lost due to absence has fallen since the last monitoring inspection, with attendance since September back to the good level reported at the inspection in December 2012. However, the issue about parents and carers ensuring that their children arrive on time every day still persists. A small but significant minority of pupils have arrived late on more than one occasion this term, missing vital minutes of learning each time.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The executive headteacher brought valuable experience of successfully tackling schools that need to improve and the sense of urgency that were missing. Working closely with the headteacher she has ensured a relentless focus on improvement since the last monitoring inspection and as a result, the rate of progress has picked up again. Parents and carers responding to the online questionnaire have greater confidence in the quality of teaching and homework, and in the progress their child is making.

There has been a sea change in staff's attitudes to change. The new staff handbook and recent training make it clear what is expected of teachers and in turn, what they should expect of pupils in lessons and by the end of the year. The system for tracking pupils' progress is much clearer. Regular half termly meetings with staff keep a check on how well pupils are doing and where extra support is needed. This clarity and the opportunity to work with teachers from the executive headteacher's school have helped to break down the resistance to change. Most staff are willing to

work hard and take responsibility for their own development. The headteacher, as well as others providing support, regularly observes lessons and gives teachers individual points for improvement afterwards. As a result, teachers now see monitoring as something which will help them and the school to improve. However, the headteacher has an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching because monitoring does not focus enough on how much pupils are learning in a lesson or over time. Similarly, the small steps in pupils' progress seen this term have been interpreted too positively. It is too early, and teaching is not good enough, for leaders to be confident that this means that pupils will reach challenging targets by the end of the school year.

In the main, the school's own leaders are keen to do well and most have a better grasp of what is required of them than at the last monitoring visit. However, their lack of experience or expertise means that they are still very reliant on external support to lead improvement. The executive headteacher and leaders in her school, and the local leader in education provide both the additional capacity needed to drive improvement in the short term and the support to coach the school's leaders in their roles for the future.

The IEB's recent work has been dominated by discussions about the school converting to an academy and the volume of queries raised by parents and carers. Nevertheless, they have not lost their sense of purpose. Their experience in education means that they have a good understanding of the school's performance and continue to question and challenge the headteacher in meetings. It is a mark of their commitment to the school's improvement that nearly all members attended the inspection feedback.

### **External support**

The local authority confirmed arrangements for the executive headteacher to work with the school shortly after the last monitoring inspection. Alongside the support from the local leader in education this has increased the school's leadership capacity and made it easier for the school to manage the support it receives by reducing the number of different people involved. The local authority and diocese invest a significant amount of officers' time as members of the IEB. Their experience is ensuring that senior leaders are held to account.

Since the last monitoring inspection the local authority has moved forward in its long-term plans for the school to convert to an academy. The IEB has agreed the proposal and a potential sponsor has been identified. Local authority officers recognise that it is important to ensure that there is appropriate support throughout the process of consultation and, if conversion is agreed, to ensure that senior leaders and the IEB do not lose their focus on improvement.