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6 December 2013

Mrs D Boughen
Acting Headteacher
Deepdale Junior School
St Stephens Road
Deepdale
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 6TD

Dear Mrs Boughen

Special measures monitoring inspection of Deepdale Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 5 December 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met you and the deputy headteacher; two representatives from the local authority and five members of the governing body. I scrutinised the school's plans to improve, the local authority's statement of action and some school documents including newsletters to parents, the acting headteacher's report to governors and an external audit of governance conducted by the local authority.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school's context.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since the inspection the acting headteacher and her deputy have been highly effective in stabilising the school and providing the leadership the school needed. They have amended and improved existing school systems and established others which should have been in place. They have, for example, made sure that every teacher knows which pupils in their classes have special educational needs, are disabled, are supported by extra government funding through the pupil premium, speak English as an additional language, and which pupils are of higher ability. As a result, teachers know the groups in their classes better and are better placed to talk about them in half-termly meetings with senior leaders. These half-termly meetings have also improved because, if a pupil is identified as making less progress than they should, the teachers now write an action plan to help pupils catch up to where they should be. Another result of knowing pupils better is an improvement in planning lessons. The senior leaders have spent a lot of time making sure that teachers plan for the different groups of pupils in their classes. Consequently, pupils are now getting more of the teaching they need and deserve.

A significant barrier to the school's progress is lack of stability in the teaching staff and leadership. The acting headteacher is temporary until the spring, so there is more disruption to come as the governing body searches for a long-term solution. The local authority has arranged for two assistant headteachers to join the school in January on a temporary basis to help school leaders. Although potentially beneficial, the temporary nature of the appointments adds to the school's instability which may prevent secure and steady improvement. Due to the fact there is still not a secure staff I have decided that newly-qualified teachers should not be appointed because there is not the capacity to mentor and support them effectively.

There have been some improvements to teaching as a result of the initiatives introduced by the deputy and acting headteacher. A new teaching and learning policy has established clearly what is expected in every lesson. New marking systems are in place and every pupil has clear targets to reach. Leaders report that pupils now have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve.

The acting headteacher has established systems to involve and engage parents. These include: frequent newsletters; speaking to parents every morning as they drop off their children; attending assemblies and events; and a suggestion box at the school office. As a result, representatives of the parents said that they felt more involved in the school and more welcomed. The school's website, however, is inadequate and a very poor tool for communicating with parents and with the wider community. It is extremely out of date and the governing body has not ensured that it meets government requirements.

The school's action plan, formed in consultation with the local authority, is detailed and constructed well. It makes very clear the actions that need to be taken, who is

monitoring how well the actions are being put into place and who exactly evaluates how successful the actions have been. There are very clear measures in place so that each term senior leaders can demonstrate the school's progress towards coming out of special measures. However, the plan does need to be strengthened further. Too many actions happen at the same time. As a result, the actions are not given the chance to embed and to have an impact. For example, this half term the focus is on improving the teaching of reading but the teachers will be deflected from the focus on reading because they are due to be trained on other things such as how to provide for able and gifted pupils, changes to the mathematics curriculum, deployment of teaching assistants, handwriting policy, assessment and writing across the curriculum.

The action plan also needs greater focus on groups of pupils and on the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent). The plan would also benefit from the local authority thoroughly moderating pupils' assessment on entry information to help the school measure progress from term to term.

As part of the improvement plan, there has been an external review of governance by the local authority and the report is highly critical. Since the inspection there have been only a few improvements to governance because of the wait for the review to take place and be published, and also because of prolonged negotiations about the leadership of the school. However, three governors have started coming into school to monitor what the school does. The governor linked to assessment, for example, spent a morning looking at how the actions in the improvement plan were being implemented. She observed a half-termly progress meeting between the deputy headteacher and a class teacher and met a group of pupils to find out whether they knew their targets and what they needed to do to improve. As a result, the governor had greater insight into the impact of the school's work. Other progress has been limited. Not enough governors, for example, attended committee meetings which means important policies cannot be agreed and implemented. This indicates a lack of commitment to the school.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

Her Majesty's Inspector