

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01216 799154
Direct email: aidan.dunne@serco.com



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Ms Caroline Kiely
Executive Headteacher
Whitmore Park Primary School
Halford Lane
Coventry
CV6 2HG

Dear Ms Kiely

Special measures monitoring inspection of Whitmore Park Primary School

Following my visit with Morag Kophamel, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 14–15 January 2014, 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 March 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 without approval from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

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 Director of Children's Services for Coventry.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the teaching that requires improvement or is inadequate to good by:
 - making sure teachers plan lessons that are more challenging for all groups of pupils
 - giving pupils more time to complete their work by reducing the time teachers spend talking
 - making the lessons in all subjects much more interesting
 - raising the teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve in lessons
 - ensuring that teachers take full responsibility for the deployment of other adults in their lessons.

- Raise standards in English and mathematics to at least average by:
 - accelerating the progress made in lessons by all groups and particularly the most able pupils
 - using the pupil premium funding to help raise the standards of those pupils for whom it is intended
 - making sure that the quality of teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs does not vary widely from year to year.

- Strengthen the leadership and the governors' ability to fulfil their responsibilities by:
 - ensuring that the headteacher and senior leaders take a determined approach to driving improvement and do not hold back tackling weak practice
 - making sure that teachers are rewarded appropriately for their teaching
 - ensuring that new leaders have the skills necessary and support of senior leaders to fulfil their responsibilities
 - undertaking a review of the work of the governing body and taking action to strengthen governors' ability to take a strategic overview of school improvement and to challenge school leaders.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 14-15 January 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, other leaders from this school and the support school, the attendance officer, pupils, parents, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, six new teachers have started at the school to replace those who have left during the same period. The deputy headteacher has increased her working hours and is now a full-time member of staff. An additional teaching assistant has been appointed to support children the Nursery.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress is accelerating across the school. Although attainment remains below average, it continues to rise and, in some classes, it is improving rapidly. As a result, more pupils are now achieving and exceeding the levels expected for their age. In all year groups, attainment is higher in reading than in writing and mathematics. The quality of teaching varies too much, which means that there is still some variability in pupils' progress from class to class, especially in Key Stage 2. Because of previous inadequate teaching, many pupils still have weaknesses in some of their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Incorrect letter formation, poor spelling and lack of simple mathematical calculation skills are holding back some pupils from achieving higher levels.

The lack of reliable progress data means that the school cannot provide robust evidence to show the progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those who have speech and language difficulties. However, work in books and observations in lessons show that the progress of most of these pupils is also accelerating. Although the attainment of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is still lower than their classmates in Key Stage 2, there is now no difference between the attainment of these two groups in Key Stage 1. The school has correctly placed greatest emphasis on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. However, this means that attainment in subjects such as history and geography is not as high as in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in writing is not as fast as it could be because they do not write at length often enough, and teachers do not create sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in subjects such as history and geography.

The quality of teaching

The upward trend in the quality of teaching continues. Good practice is being shared and additional support is given to teachers when required. Changes to the teaching staff, staff training and guidance, and the executive headteacher's relentless drive to improve teachers' skills have resulted in a better quality of teaching throughout the school. There is now a substantial proportion of teaching that is consistently good in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups and in the enhanced support groups. The school's own information shows that the newly implemented method of improving pupils' literacy skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is beginning to have a positive impact on improving pupils' skills in reading and writing.

All teachers now have a clear understanding that they must plan work for pupils of different abilities. However, teachers' assessments are not always accurate and the work they give to pupils in lessons, including those in the speech and language unit, does not always build effectively on what the pupils already know, understand and can do. Nevertheless, more pupils, including the more able, are now benefiting from work that extends their understanding, improves their knowledge and develops their skills. Better-quality teaching has led to pupils having a much more positive attitude in lessons. In all classes, pupils are more independent, settle more quickly to their tasks and take greater pride in their work. Relationships between teachers and pupils remain very positive and, in all lessons observed, the climate for learning was calm, orderly and purposeful.

Teachers' marking continues to improve. Most teachers now provide good guidance to pupils how to improve their work and many give pupils opportunities to follow this advice and learn from their mistakes. The quality of support provide by teaching assistants is too variable. Some provide a good level of support, but lack of training for teaching assistants means that some do not provide pupils with the guidance needed to ensure good progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that they now enjoy nearly all of their lessons. They feel that they are more actively involved in their learning and hardly ever feel bored and uninterested. During the inspection, pupils were polite and well mannered. In lessons, pupils collaborate well and are keen to improve their ideas through discussion. Attendance is improving and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is beginning to decline. However, attendance remains below average and continues to be a priority for the school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The drive and determination of the executive headteacher have continued to be pivotal to all improvements, and are the main reasons why teaching has improved and progress has accelerated. There are clear leadership structures and lines of accountability, and a stronger scrutiny of performance. Leaders set clear expectations for staff and take decisive action to tackle any underperformance. Senior leaders set targets for teachers and ensure that pay progression and promotion are clearly linked to performance. All leaders say that they appreciate the clear direction the executive headteacher gives them, balanced by the autonomy she allows in leading their areas of responsibility. They feel that they are very effectively helped to develop their leadership roles.

Staff share the executive headteacher's ambition and drive for improvement. There is a strong sense of teamwork, common sense of purpose and a determination that all staff can and will bring about the changes needed. The deputy headteacher's increase in working hours from part time to full time has allowed her more opportunity to improve her leadership skills and play a greater role in improving teaching and raising achievement. The increasing skills of the school's other senior and middle leaders have added significant strength to the leadership and their capacity for further improvement.

Leaders have correctly identified that information about pupils' achievement has not been accurate enough. As a result, an external consultant has been used to confirm where teachers have made accurate assessments or made amendments where necessary. Additional training has been given to staff to improve their skills of accurately assessing pupils' levels of attainment. There are now accurate assessments from which the school's leaders and governors can measure pupils' progress. All leaders continue to develop their understanding of how to use assessment data to measure pupils' progress. However, not all leaders are sufficiently skilled in using this information to identify patterns and trends in achievement of any particular group and then implementing actions to address the causes of any underachievement.

The transition of leadership responsibility from those who are supporting the school to the school's own leaders is beginning to accelerate as the school's own leaders improve their skills and confidence. Many of the school's leaders are now carrying out a range of monitoring and evaluating activities, such as looking at pupils' books to check on progress, and observing lessons and advising teachers how to improve the quality of their teaching.

The executive headteacher and other leaders are well supported by the increasingly effective and influential governing body. Many governors have received training to enable them to interpret the school's performance data and use this information to

challenge the school effectively about progress of different groups of pupils. Governors are committed and determined, and are increasingly able to promote the school's improvement.

External support

Effective external support is making a strong contribution to the school's progress and is enabling it to build capacity for further improvement. Good input from the local authority and a number of external consultants, and strong support from leaders and teachers at a local outstanding school are contributing positively to school improvement.