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30 January 2014

Ms Jill Davis
Executive Headteacher
Terrington St John Primary School
School Road
Terrington St John
Wisbech
PE14 7SG

Dear Ms Davis

Special measures monitoring inspection of Terrington St John Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement 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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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 the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely
Paul Tomkow

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - give pupils work that is at the right level for them, especially ensuring that it is hard enough to challenge the more able
 - use the skills of support staff effectively during all parts of the lesson
 - have sufficiently high expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' written work
 - encourage pupils to learn to work without always having direct help from adults.

- Improve pupils' achievement, especially in writing and reading, by:
 - improving teachers' knowledge of how to teach reading and writing, particularly the links between letters and the sounds they make
 - ensuring every opportunity is given to all pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - making sure that marking highlights the strengths in pupils' work, provides clear guidance about how it can be improved, and gives enough attention to the quality of writing and handwriting, whatever the subject
 - improving pupils' attendance.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring leaders:
 - check regularly that teachers' lessons and lesson plans result in pupils making better progress in their work, including those receiving support through the pupil premium
 - give all staff performance management objectives for improving their teaching, providing them with any necessary training to help achieve their targets, and holding them to account for the progress pupils make
 - use evidence in pupils' books to be sure that assessments of standards and progress are accurate, and record and present these judgements clearly
 - use more accurate information about how well the school is doing to write sharply focused plans for improving the school's performance
 - carefully, consistently and robustly follow up and record any inappropriate behaviour or incidents of bullying.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 28–29 January 2014

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, two governors, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority. HMI observed four lessons jointly with the executive headteacher, listened to pupils read and talked to a group of pupils about their work. I also met with the teachers.

Context

Since the previous inspection the assistant headteacher has left the school. An acting deputy headteacher has been appointed to the federation of schools, and is currently spending 1.5 days each week at Terrington St John. This role is confirmed until April 2014. The governing body is currently recruiting a permanent deputy headteacher, who will work across the federation. A new teacher for the Key Stage 2 class started in January.

Following consultation with the Department for Education (DfE), the school is no longer seeking academy status; instead a proposal to extend the current Three School Federation to include West Walton, the school where the executive headteacher is currently the substantive headteacher, is being pursued by governors.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2013 Key Stage 1 results were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Results at the end of Key Stage 2, however, showed that overall achievement at the school remains low, particularly in mathematics and writing. On average, pupils were more than a year behind the standards expected for their age. Improvements have been made to the teaching of reading. In the 2013 Year 1 phonics check (the sounds that letters make) the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was above that found in schools nationally, as it was in 2012. Pupils are now making more progress in Key Stage 2 but the rate of improvement is still too slow.

The school's tracking system now gives a clearer picture of pupils' performance in reading, writing and mathematics. The data indicates that, while overall standards are rising, the rate of improvement is not rapid enough. This was confirmed during this inspection in the lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' books. School leaders are aware of the need for significant improvement and have set targets to measure progress that are both realistic and aspirational.

The quality of teaching

Although there is now some good teaching at the school, there is still too much that is inadequate or requires improvement. Records of lessons observed by the executive headteacher clearly show where teaching is weak and needs to be improved. Appropriate training and support has been provided for teachers and teaching assistants and this has led to the strengthening of some teaching. Significant weaknesses remain but the executive headteacher is resolute in her determination to bring about the necessary improvements.

In the better lessons seen during this inspection, there was a clear purpose to the teaching. The teacher had high expectations and ensured that all pupils remained well focused by asking searching questions and setting challenging work. Pupils engaged with great enthusiasm, worked hard and made good progress. In the weaker lessons, there was a lack of clarity about what exactly the pupils were supposed to be learning. As a consequence, little learning took place although pupils willingly completed the tasks that were set.

For long periods of each day, some pupils are taught by teaching assistants in separate rooms. Where the teacher had provided clear direction about the purpose of the lesson, teaching assistants were able to support pupils well and help them to move on in their learning. On some occasions, however, the teacher failed to give sufficient guidance to the teaching assistants about the purpose of the lesson. As a result, teaching assistants merely supervised activities rather than helping to develop pupils' skills and understanding. This resulted in too many pupils not making good enough progress in their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' conduct around the school and their behaviour towards each other is strengthening. Pupils are well mannered and polite, and they get on well with each other. Their attitudes to learning are good. Behaviour now is such that, even when activities are not demanding, pupils persevere and sustain a good level of concentration and effort. They listen attentively to teachers' instructions and respond promptly. In the good lessons pupils had a clear sense of their own achievement, whereas in the less effective lessons pupils were not clear about their learning because they were not sure what was expected of them.

Attendance of pupils in Key Stage 2 has improved slightly. Overall it remains below average, largely because of illness in Key Stage 1 during the autumn term. The school has good systems for encouraging good attendance and following up pupil absence.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher has acted swiftly and is taking all the necessary steps to address the inadequacies identified at the inspection in April 2013. She knows the school's strengths and weaknesses, and has taken effective action to tackle the main causes of underperformance. Significant improvements have been made to behaviour, a development welcomed by pupils and staff alike. Action is being taken to address inadequate teaching. Training has been provided and teachers are now being held to account for their pupils' progress.

The executive headteacher has provided good quality information to governors about the school's performance. As a result, they are becoming more effective in challenging the school and holding it to account. They have an accurate understanding of the barriers to success, and are providing the school with a good balance of support and challenge. They are also aware that further action is needed to improve teaching so that rates of progress across the school improve further. Importantly, school leaders realise that weaknesses remain and that urgent action is needed to ensure that there is no inadequate teaching at the school and more teaching is at least good.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. The local authority is supporting the school well. It is providing professional development for teachers and teaching assistants, and brokering the services of the acting deputy headteacher. Through its improvement board, the local authority is also holding the school to account by monitoring and evaluating progress against the statement of action.