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24 January 2014

Mr John Maxwell
The Headteacher
Bourne Primary School
Melbourne Road
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN22 8BD

Dear Mr Maxwell

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bourne Primary School

Following my visit with John Worgan, Additional Inspector, to your school on 22 and 23 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 your staff, pupils and parents 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 May 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.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to at least good and so raise pupils' achievement, especially for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, by making sure that:
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve, and challenge them to work hard
 - teachers spend more time in lessons checking that pupils are making enough progress and adapting their teaching accordingly
 - teachers mark books regularly and in a way that allows pupils to understand what they need to do to make their work better and give pupils time to respond to the marking
 - teachers plan work that pupils can do without relying too much on adult help
 - teachers plan tasks and activities in a range of subjects that encourage pupils to use and practise what they already know and can do, especially in mathematics
 - teachers expect pupils to present their work neatly and to take pride in their work.
- Improve attendance for all pupils to at least average by:
 - closely monitoring the effectiveness of current initiatives to see whether they are working and amending them if they are not having sufficient impact
 - making sure parents are fully aware of the consequences of poor attendance.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that teachers whose practice is not good enough quickly receive high quality support to improve
 - ensuring development plans include more detailed and specific targets that are easy to measure
 - analysing information about pupils' attainment and progress more rigorously to ensure pupils in every class are making at least good progress and holding teachers more firmly to account if this is not happening
 - ensuring the governing body holds school leaders robustly to account for improvements in pupil outcomes
 - undertaking an external review of governance to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 January 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed parts of 16 lessons, eight of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors watched the headteacher and an assistant headteacher giving feedback to teachers. During the visit, inspectors met with school staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority. They talked to pupils in lessons, looked at their books and met with 30 pupils from Years 2, 4 and 6. They also met with 17 parents and watched two school assemblies. Inspectors observed parts of two coaching sessions led by external consultants. Inspectors scrutinised the school's action plan and self-evaluation. They also looked at information about teaching, pupils' achievement and attendance.

Context

There have been no major contextual changes since the previous monitoring inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 improved in 2013. Their unvalidated attainment in mathematics was much closer to the national average. Attainment in reading and writing had improved but was still too low. The unvalidated attainment of those pupils in Year 6 who took the National Curriculum tests in 2013 was below the national average. Their attainment in writing was exceptionally low. Overall, these pupils had made inadequate progress from their starting points.

The attainment of pupils currently in the school, including those who are in receipt of free school meals, is rising. Pupils are making faster progress because the quality of teaching is improving and many, but not all, are beginning to catch up on their past underachievement. Nevertheless, there is too much variation in achievement across different year groups and pupils' performance in writing is consistently weak.

The quality of teaching

Overall, the quality of teaching is improving. The proportion of good teaching is rising steadily and a small proportion is occasionally outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers have higher expectations about what pupils of different abilities can achieve. They usually plan lessons with three explicit levels of challenge and pupils are encouraged to begin with the work that is best suited to their needs. Consequently, less time is wasted and the rate of progress made by most pupils is increasing. Nevertheless, inspectors also observed a small number of inadequate lessons. Although such lessons are reducing in number, the quality of teaching across year groups and within some individual teachers' routine practice is inconsistent. In weaker lessons, pupils are kept busy on tasks that are often

interesting but the focus for their learning is unclear or muddled. Consequently, they make slower progress.

Marking has improved since the last visit. Teachers mark books regularly. New systems are beginning to improve the quality of teachers' comments and require pupils to improve their work with their 'green polishing pens'. General presentation is neater and pupils take greater pride in their work. They say that teachers are planning a wider range of activities, that learning is more fun and that there are more opportunities to work independently or collaborate in small groups. This term pupils have been working with 'learning partners'. This new approach encourages pupils to help each other and to discuss their learning with greater confidence. As one pupil in Year 6 said, 'You learn from each other and you learn to get along with people you don't play with.' In a Year 2 lesson, pupils made quick progress when writing a formal report about a visit from a local policeman because the teacher made judicious use of 'learning partners' as part of a well-planned sequence of activities. However, in some lessons the approach does not always maximise pupils' learning, especially for the more able.

There have been recent changes to the way teachers plan, teach and assess mathematics. In general, pupils are making better progress in the subject because they have better opportunities to practise their skills as part of their 'learning journey'. Similar changes are planned for English. Nevertheless, these policies are new and will take time to embed before all teachers use them with confidence.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance is improving slowly, although, overall, it is still too low. Currently, attendance in Years 2 to 6 is close to the national average. However, attendance in Year 1, Reception and Nursery is much lower. The school tracks the attendance of different groups of pupils carefully. There have been improvements in attendance for pupils eligible for free school meals and those with disabilities or special educational needs, although this varies across year groups.

The school promotes good attendance through its rewards systems, assemblies and letters home. Parents are reminded of the importance of good attendance at parents' evenings and through the school newsletter. They are contacted quickly when pupils are absent. The school works closely with external agencies to help improve attendance. It uses its improved information about attendance to identify patterns in absence and to work with pupils and their families. Although improving, there are still too many pupils who find it hard to attend school regularly and some families who find it harder to work with the school.

Parents and pupils say that behaviour is improving. Inspectors agree. Pupils are typically polite, welcoming and helpful. In lessons, they concentrate for longer periods and work harder. Some parents were concerned that behaviour at lunch and play times was not always as good as it could be. The headteacher is aware of these concerns and plans are in place to ensure behaviour improves further.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching. Whole school training for staff has been complemented by coaching support for individual teachers. Most teachers have begun to improve their everyday practice, although some find it hard to teach consistently to the best of their ability. Middle leaders are beginning to take greater responsibility for their areas of work. Recently, they have been given dedicated leadership time and a specific set of responsibilities. Nevertheless, their impact on school improvement is in its very early stages.

The school's action plan includes measurable targets that focus specifically on outcomes for different groups of pupils. Senior leaders analyse information about pupils' achievement more rigorously. They use this information to hold teachers to account and identify what further support pupils need. Although the information that the school collects about pupils' achievement is more accurate, some teachers are less confident when assessing pupils' work, particularly in writing.

The Chair of the Interim Executive Board meets with leaders regularly to monitor their work. She visits lessons to see if the policies that leaders have initiated are happening in the classroom. The interim executive board monitors outcomes for pupils and challenges leaders to improve teaching at a faster rate. It is working with leaders to overhaul how the school spends its pupil premium grant and evaluates the impact of its work with pupils eligible for free school meals.

Parents say that the headteacher has made a positive difference. They say that staff at the school are helpful and that communication with home is effective. Even so, they would like better information on the school website and additional support to help their children with phonics, numeracy and homework.

External support

The local authority link adviser visits the school regularly to monitor its progress. She has helped leaders to moderate their judgements about the quality of teaching. External coaching for specific teachers has begun to improve their day-to-day practice. The headteacher has ensured that this support is aligned with the school's priorities. The Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the local authority link adviser monitor the impact of this work through reports from coaches and feedback from teachers. However, the local authority has not yet checked at first hand the quality of the coaching sessions. The school has developed links with successful schools that provide opportunities for teachers to see good and outstanding practice. Together, these strategies are improving the overall quality of teaching. Nevertheless, inconsistencies remain across different year groups.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that teachers have a shared understanding of how to teach and assess writing successfully so that attainment in this area improves more quickly.
- Strengthen teachers' assessment of pupils' work, particularly in writing, so that information about their achievement is even more accurate.