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Ms Kudsia Batool
Headteacher
Pear Tree Community Junior School
Pear Tree Street
Derby
DE23 8PN

Dear Ms Batool

Special measures monitoring inspection of Pear Tree Community Junior School

Following my visit with Enid Korn, Additional Inspector and Mel Ford, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 4–5 March 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 appoint one newly qualified teacher in any year group.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2012

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - lessons proceed quickly and teachers' expectations of pupils' learning are high
 - teachers spend less time telling pupils what they have to learn and provide more opportunities for them to learn things for themselves
 - work provided is matched closely to pupils' different abilities so it is neither too hard nor too easy
 - best practice in teaching is shared within the school.

- Improve behaviour by ensuring that:
 - a clear behaviour policy is agreed and consistently applied by all staff
 - the school promotes positive relationships and respect between pupils
 - all incidents are logged and all the actions taken are effective and followed up.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making expectations of good teaching clear to all staff
 - developing and applying thorough and accurate systems to check the quality of teaching
 - giving teachers clear targets for improvement and checking that these are achieved
 - ensuring the interim executive board checks that all groups of pupils are making good progress regularly.

- Promote the importance of attendance to pupils and parents so rates rise to at least the national average.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 4–5 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection, four class teachers and an assistant headteacher have left the school. One assistant headteacher is off work on long-term absence and one class teacher is on maternity leave. There has been a significant reduction of support staff due to a restructuring exercise. An acting deputy headteacher has been temporarily appointed and a teaching mentor has joined the school. Three class teachers have been appointed along with a Community Development and Support Officer. Ten support staff and a business manager have been appointed, and new staff are now leading English and mathematics across the school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the systems which track and analyse pupil progress information. This has enabled the headteacher, other leaders and teachers to gain a more accurate view of how pupils are achieving. As a result staff have a better idea of how to intervene when pupils fall behind with their learning. More support has been provided and this is regularly reviewed and analysed for impact. Although improvements have been made to the procedures to monitor pupils' progress, more needs to be done to refine the systems further.

There still remains variation in the performance of pupils across subjects and classes. The legacy of underperformance means that standards are still too low and pupils have not caught up with their learning. However, recent changes to groupings of pupils, particularly in Year 6, have enabled focus groups to develop specific skills and understanding. This work is already paying dividends and beginning to accelerate pupils' progress. There are some year groups and classes where progress is not accelerate rapidly enough. For example, progress in Years 3 and 4 is not as good as in Years 5 and 6. However, evidence gathered from lesson observations shows that pupils are beginning to make better progress overall.

Leaders at all levels are aware that weaknesses in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding persist. The headteacher is clear that this will not be tolerated and is working to eradicate weaknesses. Teachers are now held to account for the progress pupils make and they are more involved in planning programmes of support to help pupils improve.

The headteacher, along with key staff, is now analysing how well groups are performing. This shows that pupils supported by the pupil premium, additional funding provided by the government which in this school supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority, are still not making enough progress. The funding is now spent well on focused teaching through a breakfast club, at lunchtimes, after school, in holidays and on Saturdays, but has not yet had an impact on standards.

The quality of teaching

Staff training has strengthened teaching, but the quality of teaching still varies considerably across the school. The marking of pupils' work has improved. Teachers are increasingly showing pupils the next steps they need to take in their learning. In the best cases pupils then engage in dialogue back to the teacher about their work. All pupils have targets to help them improve. They understand what their targets mean and know what they need to do to reach the next level.

Generally, pupils are keen to complete work and have good attitudes to learning. However, when teaching is less strong pupils' attention wanders and this results in them making less progress.

The headteacher and Interim Executive Board, with support from the local authority, have been instrumental in eradicating weaker teaching. As a result, more teaching is now good. Every class teacher has an action plan and the acting deputy headteacher is working with them to help develop the quality of teaching.

Teaching, especially in upper Key Stage 2, is focused on developing pupils' basic skills. In the afternoon pupils are taught other aspects of the curriculum, for example arts subjects and topics. However, too little emphasis is given to developing pupils' basic skills in these subjects and the quality of teaching is less effective. Generally, pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length in these lessons.

Pupils report that teaching has improved. One pupil explained, 'We get a good education.'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Generally, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is beginning to make a positive contribution to their learning and to the atmosphere in school. Pupils are polite to each other and respectful to the adults in school. A greater priority has been given to supporting pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The school has appointed a Community Development and Support Officer who is providing valuable support to ensure these pupils are fully integrated into school life.

Most pupils feel safe. Although pupils report that there is still fighting and swearing in the playground, they are confident that is tackled well and that staff stop it reoccurring.

The headteacher monitors incidents of bullying and poor behaviour. These are recorded in class records. However, bullying logs are not reviewed by type and so insufficient detail is provided about trends of poor behaviour.

Attendance is improving, and much work is carried out to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. Good attendance is celebrated in weekly assemblies, and a cup awarded to the class with the best attendance. The headteacher and Interim Executive Board regularly talk to parents to promote punctuality and attendance. The number of exclusions of pupils has risen. This is because the headteacher and Interim Executive Board are taken a firm stance of poor behaviour in order to encourage all pupils to behave well.

Checks to ensure the safety of all pupils are effective. Steps have been taken to ensure all staff are suitably trained in child protection and safeguarding of pupils.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Changes to the senior leadership team have resulted in a concerted effort to improve the school. The headteacher has prioritised areas for improvement and has supported improvements through staff training. The leadership team has clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and all are clear about how they contribute towards school improvement. A greater focus has been given to improving teaching and links have been made between the quality of lessons and pupils' progress.

The 'phase leaders' are more aware about how they contribute to school improvement. They have received training to support them in their role and they are beginning to hold class teachers to account for pupils' outcomes. They are involved in pupil progress meetings, where the progress for all individual pupils and groups of pupils is discussed.

Action plans for how the school intends to improve are focused on the correct priorities. However, the way in which these plans are reviewed places too little focus on evaluating the impact of actions taken.

The school has made plans to develop a new curriculum. Leaders intend to provide a curriculum that motivates pupils and develops their skills. It is being strengthened because thought has been given to improving pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects. However, the curriculum plan uses a published scheme and has not been sufficiently adapted to the specific needs of the pupils in the school.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are beginning to receive more tailored support. This is because the school is becoming better at identifying their specific needs.

The Interim Executive Board is highly skilful and knowledgeable about what needs to be done to bring about much needed change. Its members are monitoring the school's performance and know the school well. They know about the quality of teaching in all classes and know where improvements are needed. They provide an excellent balance of support and challenge to the headteacher and other leaders. The Chair has committed to greater involvement in the leadership and management of the school.

External support

The local authority has been instrumental in securing the services of consultants who are helping to secure school improvement. This has helped improve teaching and learning, which is beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement. Local authority officers regularly review the performance of the school, carry out lesson observations and provide guidance where appropriate.