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28 February 2014

Mrs C Wreglesworth
The Interim Executive Headteacher
Bedgrove Junior School
Ingram Avenue
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP21 9DN

Dear Mrs Wreglesworth

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bedgrove Junior School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Cooper, Additional Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 February, 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 July 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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint up to two 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - activities pupils are given in lessons and the targets they have are always closely matched to what they need to learn next
 - adults who support pupils in lessons prompt and question them well
 - teachers have high expectations of the amount pupils are capable of doing and learning in lessons, and challenge them to think deeply
 - pupils are actively engaged in their learning throughout the lesson
 - teachers' written comments on pupils' work tell pupils clearly what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their performance.
- Ensure that phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught systematically to pupils who still have difficulty reading.
- Make sure that pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes racist behaviour, its unacceptability and how to combat it, and that parents are properly notified of racist incidents.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring:
 - teaching is frequently and rigorously checked, and teachers given clear feedback on what to improve
 - subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator are fully involved in identifying and bringing about improvements
 - actions the school takes to improve are fully evaluated
 - judgements about how good the school is take into account a full range of evidence
 - governors hold the school's leaders fully to account for pupils' performance.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 February 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, members of the interim executive board (IEB), a representative from the local authority, other leaders including the subject leaders for English and mathematics, groups of teachers, a group of parents and groups of pupils. Inspectors observed 17 lessons and analysed pupils' work and teachers' marking.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, one teacher has left the school and two have joined. One teaching assistant has started. The acting head of school has returned to her role as the substantive deputy headteacher. The consultant headteacher joined the school at the beginning of January 2014 for the equivalent of two days a week. Previously, she was the headteacher of Buckingham Primary School, a good school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement is starting to improve, particularly since the beginning of January. Pupils are making faster progress in lessons and the work in their books shows that they are beginning to make increased progress over time. Pupils' writing has improved in quality and quantity, and pupils are now given regular opportunities to write at length. Achievement in reading has started to improve because teachers are dedicating more time to the teaching of reading, including phonics (the sounds letters make). Year 6 pupils have made the most rapid progress. However, because of underachievement in the past, the proportions of pupils on track to make expected progress by the end of Key Stage 2 remain low. This is especially true for Year 5 pupils, and in mathematics.

The school's systems for tracking pupils' achievement have improved, which means that teachers and leaders can now identify pupils who are underachieving accurately and quickly. Increasingly, teachers and teaching assistants are using this information to take effective action to tackle underachievement. However, the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those eligible for the pupils premium remains too inconsistent. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are achieving more because of improved support in lessons and carefully targeted extra help outside of lessons. The most able pupils are making steady progress.

The quality of teaching

More teaching is now good or better. A minority of teaching is still inadequate, but this is reducing rapidly. Teachers are determined to improve. As a result, pupils are increasingly being given work that is challenging, and they are expected to produce more work of higher quality during lessons. Teachers' marking has improved

significantly. Pupils' work is marked very regularly, and pupils are given clear advice about what to do to improve their work further. They are often required to make these improvements, although this is inconsistent, particularly in mathematics. Teachers are planning lessons with high expectations of pupils' achievement, especially in English. Teaching assistants now have a very positive impact on pupils' progress.

In the best teaching, pupils are challenged well and they know what they have to do to succeed. Teachers and other adults make sure that pupils know how to tackle tasks through clear explanations and effective demonstrations. Teachers' questioning extends pupils' thinking. Teachers regularly check on pupils' progress during lessons, providing extra challenge and support when needed. In the weaker teaching, however, teachers' subject knowledge is not yet good enough. As a result, teachers do not provide work that is well matched to pupils' levels of attainment and so pupils make slow progress. The necessary subject knowledge exists within the school but it needs to be shared more effectively.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance is high and pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils say they now enjoy coming to school, feel safe and work hard. The parents that inspectors spoke to during the inspection agreed. In the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, pupils were motivated and enthusiastic, showing a strong desire to learn and achieve well. They occasionally lose concentration when teaching is weaker.

Pupils are smartly dressed, polite, and show respect for each other and the adults they work with. Bullying is now very rare and is dealt with effectively when it occurs. There have been no racial incidents since November 2013, because pupils now understand what acceptable behaviour is and what is not. These improvements have been supported by regular assemblies which focus on different issues, the development and implementation of clear rules for pupils' behaviour, and a range of other initiatives, such as 'Show Racism the Red Card'.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders are rapidly improving teaching. Inadequate teaching is being quickly eliminated and the proportion of good or better teaching is growing. They now monitor teaching very regularly, providing teachers with accurate and specific targets for improvement. Teachers receive regular appropriate training and have visited other good or outstanding schools to observe teaching. Effective additional support is given to teachers who need to improve the most. Senior leaders now hold teachers robustly to account for the achievement of the pupils that they teach. The school's action plan is now fit for purpose and it includes ambitious and measurable targets for pupils' achievement. Senior leaders regularly gather a wide range of evidence to evaluate the progress the school is making.

While senior leaders have rightly focused on improving teaching, this has meant that there has been less progress in improving leadership at other levels. Overall, other leaders' impact on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching is too inconsistent. For example, both the English subject leader and the leader of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have had a demonstrably positive impact on teaching. However, this is not yet consistently the case for the mathematics subject leader or the year group leaders. The roles and responsibilities of these leaders are not defined clearly enough.

The parents that inspectors met with during the inspection report that communications with parents have significantly improved. Newsletters and the school's website are now more helpful and informative. The interim executive headteacher deals swiftly and effectively with any queries or issues. Parents value her clear commitment to the school and to achieving the best for their children.

The IEB was established very recently and consequently has not had time to have an impact. However, members are acting with urgency to secure the school's continued improvement. For example, a group of them visited the school during the monitoring inspection to observe and evaluate the behaviour and safety of pupils. The previous governing body had had insufficient impact since the last monitoring inspection. Crucially, they failed, along with the local authority, to secure the necessary contractual and remuneration arrangements for the interim executive headteacher and the consultant headteacher. While both of these senior leaders are fully committed to the school, it is critical that the IEB and the local authority formalise these arrangements as soon as possible.

External support

The local authority did not act quickly enough to establish the IEB. However, the IEB now in place is comprised of members with a wide and extremely strong range of relevant experience. The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. The school improvement adviser visits the school regularly and provides effective challenge and support for school leaders. He monitors the school's improvement, which is formally evaluated by a senior local authority officer. He has also brokered good links with St Louis Catholic Primary School, a local outstanding school.

The consultant headteacher has created a strong partnership with Buckingham Primary School. Leaders from both schools now work together and teachers have observed good and outstanding teaching. Links continue with Bedgrove Infant School, including the effective utilisation of an advanced skills teacher for one day a week, and have helped to improve weaker teaching.