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7 March 2014

Mrs Debra Marshall
Acting Executive Headteacher
Elson Infant School
Elson Lane
Gosport
PO12 4EU

Dear Mrs Marshall

Special measures monitoring inspection of Elson Infant School

Following my visit with Stephanie Matthews, Additional inspector, to your school on 5–6 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 the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 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 continue to appoint up to one newly qualified teacher (NQT) in each year group 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 Hampshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

John Seal

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Significantly improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that at least the majority of children reach a good level of development by:
 - ensuring there is effective leadership and management for all staff working in Reception
 - identifying correctly the additional needs of vulnerable pupils and those at risk of underachieving early on in Reception
 - producing an action plan which communicates high expectations for all staff and children and includes challenging targets
 - ensuring that lesson planning specifies the intended learning outcomes, including key vocabulary, for all the required areas of learning
 - ensuring that all staff help children to focus on their learning
 - encouraging children to practise the skills they have learnt in the activities they choose for themselves.
- Raise the achievement of all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for boys, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, so that all make expected progress and reach at least the levels expected for their age by:
 - ensuring there is rigorous and systematic daily teaching of letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) for all pupils and that pupils are encouraged to use and apply their phonics skills when reading and writing across the curriculum
 - increasing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary in mathematics
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that a substantial and increasing proportion of teaching is good or better by:
 - making sure teachers take responsibility for meeting the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and for this to be reflected in their planning
 - structuring lessons in a way that enables all pupils to work independently
 - ensuring there is a good pace of learning by increasing the level of challenge for the more-able pupils so that their knowledge, skills and understanding progress well
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas before they start writing
 - embedding the use of assessment strategies during lessons so that teachers check more regularly and accurately the learning and progress being made by different groups of pupils.
- Ensuring that leaders, managers and the governing body become effective in driving and embedding improvements throughout the school, by:

- developing the role of governors so that they hold the school to account for the progress made by different groups of learners and contribute more effectively to the strategic direction of the school
- developing the role of middle managers so that they are proactive in leading their areas of responsibility in line with the school's priorities
- improving the quality of action plans so that they all specify what impact initiatives will have on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils
- ensuring that all action plans include success criteria that are measurable, so that progress can be checked at regular intervals
- making sure that self-evaluation is rooted in evidence about the impact that actions are having on the development, learning and progress of different groups of pupils.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 5–6 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting executive headteacher, head of school, staff, two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority, and listened to a sample of pupils reading.

Context

No significant changes have occurred since the last monitoring inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The proportion of pupils whose attainment is in line with or above that seen nationally has continued to increase. In Year 2, there are now more pupils attaining higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics than when compared to the same group of pupils this time last year. The gaps between different groups of pupils are narrowing in Years 1 and 2. This is especially the case for those pupils receiving pupil premium funding. Those who are disabled or have special educational needs are gaining ground. Children in Reception classes continue to make reasonable progress.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving rapidly. The proportion of good teaching is increasing and there are even more examples of outstanding teaching. Senior leaders know that there are still some pockets of teaching that require improvement. These were observed by inspectors during the monitoring inspection.

The good and outstanding teaching is characterised by teachers' instructions to pupils that are precise and simple; helping them to understand what they are expected to do and what they will be learning in their lesson. In one good mathematics lesson, Year 2 pupils were learning about three-dimensional shapes. The key features that distinguished this lesson included clear-cut instructions and questions that checked how well pupils had grasped ideas and new learning. Well-matched resources such as small hand-held posters and shapes were used to demonstrate the different features of shapes. These ingredients enabled pupils to make good progress.

In the diminishing number of lessons where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not provide the clarity that pupils need to learn. This leads to confusion and misunderstandings. Appropriate and well-targeted support for weaker teaching

is provided by senior leaders and additional support for groups of pupils is led by very able teaching assistants often outside of the classroom. However, the intensity of support and intervention for some teachers needs to be reduced in order to ensure that their accountability for the progress of the pupils in their charge is clear. Training and professional support for staff are well planned and delivered to meet the needs of different teachers. This includes the support for NQTs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Around the school, in the playground and in the vast majority of lessons, pupils are attentive, eager to learn and enjoy their work. Attendance is good. Relationships are very positive and the atmosphere in school is calm, purposeful and productive. Most teachers' behaviour management is effective. There is usually a strong focus on learning with minimum disruption. Pupils respond well to adults and treat each other well. However, there continue to be a few incidents of low-level disruption. For example, pupils continue to talk when the teacher is talking, or they do not settle down to their work quickly enough. This is not always tackled promptly by teachers. As a result, some pupils' progress slows in lessons and in a very small number of cases, other pupils' learning is disrupted.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The highly effective partnership of the acting executive headteacher and head of school has ensured that the school is on the right track to maintain the improvements they have initiated. Plans for improvement are robust and illustrate the clear path required for the school to maintain its current trajectory of improvement. For example, higher proportions of good teaching and the achievement of pupils have been set and are coming into view.

When the senior leaders and other staff spoke to the inspector, they were very clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses and what was needed to make further improvements. Their tracking and analysis of pupils' work and achievement are accurate, and the judgments of the quality of teaching are secure. However, the documents that summarise the performance of the school misrepresent this clear understanding by concentrating on the positive points to the exclusion of the areas that require attention. More senior leaders take an active role in monitoring the quality of teaching and achievement of pupils than in the past. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that the monitoring of the quality of provision for groups of pupils such as those with special educational needs and the more able provides the school with a clear picture of strengths and weakness.

The governing body has a clear oversight of the school's performance and its minutes and recording of challenge and questioning are exemplary. The school is held to account in a robust and rigorous manner. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been effectively overseen by the executive headteacher and in the very near future the school is hoping to interview and appoint a new leader for this stage.

External support

The support from the local authority remains effective, and is at a much lighter level than previously seen. The school still draws upon the expertise of the inspectors and advisory teachers for English and mathematics and the specialist teacher for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Other support includes the Leadership and Learning Partner who regularly monitors the school's performance and reports to the strategic group of senior council officers and school leaders, including the governors. The partnership with the local outstanding school led by the executive headteacher continues to develop particularly well the support for NQTs.