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Kathryn Simmons
Headteacher
Bradfield CE Primary School
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RG7 6HR

Dear Mrs Simmons

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bradfield CE Primary School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Farr, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 19 and 20 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 December 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 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, the Director of Children's Services for West Berkshire and the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Alison Storey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to good and eradicate inadequate teaching by:
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge
 - ensuring teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensuring they always set hard enough tasks for all pupils, including the most able
 - ensuring that lessons start promptly, lesson introductions are not overlong and pupils are moved quickly on to the main task
 - improving the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 and helping pupils to apply their knowledge of phonics when spelling.

- Ensure more pupils reach average and higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 by:
 - improving pupils' handwriting, punctuation and spelling and the way pupils present their work in books
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces and to write for different purposes
 - giving the least-able pupils in Key Stage 1 opportunities to read every day
 - providing training for teachers to enhance their skills in teaching mathematics
 - ensuring play activities in the Reception class are purposeful and promote children's skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring all leaders and managers share high expectations for pupils' achievement and are more accountable for the school's performance
 - ensuring teachers who are in charge of subjects play a full part in checking pupils' performance, raising achievement and improving teaching
 - developing the curriculum so that teachers can teach the basic skills systematically, and so that it includes increased challenge for more-able pupils.

- Improve the effectiveness of governance by ensuring governors:
 - have a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils
 - challenge school leaders by holding them robustly to account for the school's performance
 - carefully check the school's performance and the impact of spending, including the pupil premium funding, on pupils' achievement
 - make sure teachers' pay is linked to the quality of their teaching.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, executive headteacher and other key staff; the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB); and representatives from the local authority and the diocese. They talked with teachers and informally with pupils during lessons and at break times, and looked at the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View).

Context

The local leader in education's support for the school finished at the end of last term. One teacher has been absent through illness since October. The teacher covering her class left at Christmas to take up a new post. The headteacher taught the class until a teacher from the executive headteacher's school took over the class in February until the end of the school year.

Over the last year, a number of pupils have left the school each term for a range of reasons. There are now 23 fewer pupils than at the inspection in December 2012.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's most recent checks on the levels pupils have reached show that overall, pupils have made clear progress in reading, writing and mathematics this school year. Rates of progress between year groups and subjects are more consistent but variations in standards remain. In most classes, reading levels are above those expected for pupils' ages. Mathematics and writing are generally closer to expected levels than previously, but not as high as they should be given pupils' abilities. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are getting off to a much better start because they have not experienced the weak teaching of the past to the same extent as older pupils. Typically, they are at or above the levels expected at this point in the school year for their age and the gap between subjects is narrower. Pupils' work in Year 3 shows progress has picked up recently after a slow start due to staff turnover.

The rates of progress pupils are making may not be as good as the school's information suggests, because leaders have rightly identified that the accuracy of some assessments needs to be checked. Nevertheless, it is clear from the learning seen in most lessons during the monitoring inspection and pupils' work in their books that they are making progress over time.

What the headlines hide is the progress different groups of pupils make and the standards they reach. In some cases, it is easier to see what the picture is because the school has done some analysis of data. For example, by looking at the data for boys and girls alongside each other, leaders can show that boys now make as much

progress as girls. However, in some classes, standards are still lower than for girls because the progress is not fast enough to make up for underachievement in the past. The school collects data for other groups but still does not analyse it in sufficient detail. On the face of it, pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are not doing as well as others. The indications are that pupils who are eligible for free school meals do not make as much progress as others, particularly in Years 3 to 6. However, the school cannot readily demonstrate whether interventions or additional support for these vulnerable pupils are closing the gap with other pupils over time and if additional funding for them is being used effectively. The school is more ambitious for its most-able pupils. It has set targets for the proportion that should reach the higher levels in each class and leaders have started to discuss individual pupils with class teachers. However, there is no overview of provision for the most-able pupils or any review of their progress.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving because teachers are more focused on what pupils have already learned and what they need to learn next. However, there are still inconsistencies and what is good in one case is often a weakness in another. Some teachers have good subject knowledge and understand how pupils progress in their learning. They use explanations and questioning well to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Where teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong, their explanations are less clear and questioning lacks challenge because they are not clear what the pupils should be learning. Teachers are better at ensuring all pupils, especially boys, are involved throughout lessons. They have higher expectations of pupils and know, given their age, what they should achieve by the end of the school year. However, while they are ambitious for the most-able pupils, they do not always challenge them enough to get the most out of them. Small-group teaching for these pupils is not effective because it is not pitched at a high enough level.

Pupils are making better progress in mathematics because the teaching of mathematics has improved since the last monitoring inspection. All teachers have had training and some have had individual support. Clear guidance sets out the steps pupils need to go through to develop mathematical skills and understanding. This helps teachers pinpoint what they need to teach next and how to adjust it for the different abilities in their class. More recently, the school has turned its attention to the teaching of reading. Precise checks have identified what pupils can read and, importantly, what they understand. The reading books have been reorganised and guidance produced on the different aspects of reading to ensure that it is taught systematically. It is early days, but a sample of reading sessions during the monitoring inspection showed that work was planned to meet different abilities and that teachers and teaching assistants were focused on developing specific skills or understanding.

Where teachers clearly identify in their planning what the pupils will be learning and how teaching assistants can support this through questioning and explanations,

support staff make a valuable contribution to lessons. Where teaching assistants are not guided clearly, their questioning is often not focused, and they are less effective. At its best, marking is precise, making it clear what pupils have done well and what could be better. Weekly timetabled sessions give pupils opportunities to respond and improve their work. Feedback is not effective where it is not specific enough to help pupils understand exactly how to improve or where they are not given opportunities to respond. In these cases, pupils sometimes receive the same feedback more than once because they do not know how, or are not given time, to improve. Pupils are clearer about their targets but they are not always sure on how they are going to achieve them. This is because sometimes targets are too broad and pupils are unclear of the small stages needed to improve their work step-by-step.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils know how they are expected to behave around school and at break times. They are courteous and respectful to each other and to adults. Occasionally, pupils forget, but all staff take responsibility for reinforcing expectations and a gentle reminder soon gets them back on track. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are continuing to improve, as teaching does. Where explanations are clear and expectations high, they respond well to the challenge and are enthusiastic about learning.

Attitudes to punctuality are an issue. There is still a small but significant minority of pupils who frequently turn up after the start of the school day. Over a third of pupils have arrived late on at least one occasion this school year. The school makes it clear through its guidance for parents and carers, and direct contact with some families, how important it is that all children arrive on time every day. It recognises this has not improved matters sufficiently so, following consultation with the local authority, the IEB is due to discuss what further action it can take.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

External support for the school has been streamlined since the last monitoring inspection and is now led by the executive headteacher and staff from her school. They can request additional support from the local authority where they feel it is necessary. The arrangements provide the additional capacity needed for day-to-day management and to drive improvement, and make managing external support easier. The partnership has provided support for some teachers on an individual basis and also been used to look at teaching and learning across the two schools. Teachers appreciated meeting their counterparts to share planning and examples of pupils' work. They are looking forward to more opportunities to discuss and observe each other's work in the future.

Monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning is now established as part of the school's work, although the two are still not linked closely enough. Feedback following lesson observations still does not focus enough on what the pupils have learned. The school

recognises it should take account of pupils' progress over time when evaluating teaching, but has not done so yet. Reviews of action plans tend to check whether actions have been completed rather than whether they have made a difference to pupils' achievement. As a result, the school's evaluation of its work lacks rigour.

Some middle leaders are establishing themselves in their roles. They are growing in confidence and showing that they are capable of taking a whole-school view of their subject. These middle leaders have responded positively to support from the headteacher, the executive headteacher and staff from her school and the local authority, and to external training. They are beginning to take a lead: training staff, monitoring pupils' progress and reporting to the IEB, and delivering presentations to involve parents and carers in their children's learning. However, as the school recognises, there are also weaknesses in middle leadership that need to be resolved as a matter of priority.

The IEB provides strength through its experience and determination to see the job of improving the school through. Clear roles and responsibilities give members a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They provide robust challenge and clear direction for leaders, and ensure better communication with parents and carers in response to the concerns some have about the school's situation. However, the IEB has not been able to fully evaluate the impact of the school's work on different groups of pupils. This is because leaders responsible have not analysed the progress of different groups in sufficient depth or looked at the impact of different interventions or additional support. In particular, the IEB has not yet been able to evaluate the use of additional money to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

External support

The local authority has ensured continuity for the school by helping to fund the support from the executive headteacher and by standing back to allow her to lead the improvement work. Both the local authority and the diocese continue to invest a significant amount of officer time as members of the IEB. The benefits are twofold. They bring expertise and experience to the IEB and their membership gives them a detailed picture of how the school is performing. However, the local authority has rightly taken the recent decision to replace the school improvement adviser on the IEB with another officer to ensure a clearer distinction between the two roles.