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24 April 2014

Mrs Sharon Mullins
Gateway Primary School
Netheravon Close
Carterton
Oxfordshire
OX18 3SF

Dear Mrs Mullins

Special measures monitoring inspection of Gateway Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 April 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, the assistant headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body. Discussions were also held with two representatives from the local authority. I scrutinised a range of other school documentation. I joined you on a tour of the school and visited every class, taking the opportunity to talk to pupils about their learning and look at their work. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and the school's development plan.

Context

Since the inspection, one class teacher, responsible for a class of Years 1 and 2 pupils, has been absent. The class has been taught by different supply teachers. A class teacher, responsible for a class of Years 5 and 6 pupils, has reduced her teaching commitment to part time. The governors are currently advertising for an

additional teacher in order to provide additional leadership time for the assistant headteacher.

Two new governors, one experienced, have been appointed by the local authority. The local authority has been exploring a federated governance arrangement with another local primary school and local community college.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders and governors accepted the inspection judgement and acknowledge that the school needs to improve. You and the assistant headteacher have worked diligently and effectively to begin to make the necessary changes.

With well-targeted support from the local authority, you have gained an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the school. Evidence collected from lesson observations, scrutiny of the work in pupils' books and teachers' planning has enabled you to identify quickly those colleagues whose teaching requires improvement or is judged inadequate. As a result, leaders have been able to offer support and training to help these teachers improve their professional practice. Staff training has correctly been given a high priority and local authority consultants with responsibility for mathematics, literacy and early years have made regular and helpful visits, although it is too early to assess the impact of this training on pupils' outcomes.

You have rightly taken steps to adjust the way subjects are taught. For example, pupils in Reception now have daily phonics (the sounds letters make) teaching, there are more regular opportunities for all pupils to write, and the teaching of literacy and numeracy for pupils in Years 1 to Year 6 is now in ability groupings. It is too early to judge what the impact of these changes will be on pupils' learning.

New systems for checking pupils' attainment and progress have been introduced in order to begin to tackle the longstanding deficiencies in the arrangements for checking pupils' progress; as a result, leaders are becoming more effective in holding teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their class. You have held regular meetings with teachers to discuss pupils' progress and you are beginning to use these meetings effectively to identify pupils who are underachieving.

The local authority has sensibly appointed two new governors and completed an external review of governance. However, so far there has been limited training and support, so governors are still unable to hold leaders to account sufficiently well. The local authority's statement of action does not address this priority adequately and, at the time of the monitoring visit, governors had not developed their understanding of

how they can fulfil their responsibilities more effectively. The local authority is at the early stages of considering a federated governing body arrangement with a local primary school and community college. Despite plans emerging, time is being lost and as a result, leaders are still not being held rigorously to account.

The local authority statement of action and the school development plan detail a range of appropriate activities. However, the plan does not specify how these actions will improve pupils' learning and achievement. It is not always clear how and by whom progress in relation to these actions will be monitored. It is unclear how leaders will be able to measure the impact of actions when they are completed. Each plan needs to be strengthened to include quantifiable targets for improvements in pupils' progress with clear timescales by which these are to be achieved.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr

Her Majesty's Inspector