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1 May 2014

Mr Ashley Howard
The Headteacher
Manor Infant School
Inverness Road
Portsmouth
PO1 5QR

Dear Mr Howard

Special measures monitoring inspection of Manor Infant School

Following my visit with Lesley Farmer, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 29 and 30 April, 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 May 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 not appoint 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring there is no inadequate teaching in Year 1 as a matter of urgency and ensuring good or better teaching for all pupils
 - improving the way undesirable behaviour is managed, and the teaching of classroom routines in Year 1
 - improving teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge, so that they have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure they always match learning tasks to the needs of all pupils
 - improving the teaching of reading and phonics in Reception and Key Stage 1 and giving the least-able pupils opportunities to read every day.
- Accelerate pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in order to ensure more pupils reach at least the levels expected for their age at the end of Reception and Year 2 by:
 - improving pupils' understanding of sounds and letters and their ability to use their skills when reading and writing
 - teaching pupils to form their letters correctly and teaching lower-attaining pupils how to write in sentences
 - providing consistent challenge for more able pupils in mathematics in Key Stage 1
 - increasing purposeful play activities in reading and writing in Reception and ensuring children are always sufficiently challenged.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance by:
 - taking a consistent and well considered stance to tackling incidents of poor behaviour
 - enlisting the help of specialist agencies to draw up personal behaviour improvement plans for pupils in most need and ensuring staff are trained to implement them
 - ensuring teachers are fully trained to implement the behaviour policy and that senior leaders closely monitor its impact
 - implementing clear and effective procedures, including working closely with families, to raise attendance rapidly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels and the school's capacity to improve by:
 - revising management structures and systems so that roles and responsibilities are clear
 - ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels are held to account for the impact of their work in helping the school to improve
 - rigorously checking the impact that teaching and subject planning have on pupils' progress, and taking quick and effective action to improve teaching and pupils' progress where needed

- developing whole-school planning for the teaching of phonics, writing and mathematics which promotes good progression of pupils' basic skills
- improving the skills of the governing body in holding the school's leaders fully to account for pupils' achievements, including linking teachers' pay to their performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 April 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed 11 lessons, including seven jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised a range of documentation including information about pupils' current attainment and progress and school leaders' analyses of the quality of teaching. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, a representative from the local authority, members of the interim executive board, class teachers and middle leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and scrutinised a sample of pupils' books from all year groups.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection, in September 2013, there have been a number of changes to staffing. The deputy headteacher left in December 2013. A member of the teaching staff has been promoted from April 2014 and is now the substantive deputy headteacher. Six class teachers, some with shared responsibilities for classes, have left, including the Early Years Foundation Stage leader. A class teacher in Year 1 started maternity leave in December 2013 and temporary teaching cover is in place. In other classes, permanent replacements have been appointed by the interim executive board. Further appointments have been made in order to expand leadership capacity, including a newly-created post of assistant headteacher and two teachers awarded additional leadership responsibilities.

Achievement of pupils at the school

You have wisely introduced a new system for tracking pupil progress which leaders are beginning to put to good effect. The system provides a clear overview of how well pupils are progressing and enables leaders to identify those that are lagging behind so they can take the necessary action to halt any underachievement.

Class teachers are now responsible for recording pupils' results on the school's assessment tracking system and leaders hold regular meetings with teachers to discuss the progress that pupils are making. This did not happen in the past. As a result, teachers are developing a better understanding of how well pupils are learning and the standards they are achieving. Leaders acknowledge that, although they have externally verified some teachers' assessments of pupils' progress, inconsistencies across year groups and subjects remain.

Pupils in Year 1 are making slow progress and reaching below expected levels of attainment; this is partly a consequence of high levels of turbulence in staffing, as well as inadequate teaching in the past. These low standards are evident in pupils' work and the understanding pupils show in lessons. Leaders' own records show that pupils in Year 2 and Reception Year are now making reasonable progress in reading and mathematics. However, in all year groups, progress in writing is much slower. Although pupils' work shows pupils are now having more regular opportunities to

write, repeated basic errors are not always corrected. As a result, the progress of learners, particularly in developing sentence writing skills, has been hindered.

The school's current records show that pupils are beginning to improve their understanding of, and use of, phonics (linking letters and sounds). However, leaders have yet to check the reliability of teachers' assessments. During the monitoring visit, pupils' understanding of sounds and letters remains too variable. In some lessons, pupils had difficulty completing tasks successfully as their understanding of sounds was limited. However, where teachers have high expectations and a secure understanding of how to teach phonics and reading, for example in a Reception class, pupils are making better progress.

Leaders have correctly identified that the progress of some groups of pupils, for example pupils eligible for free school meals, is slower than others. They now provide additional support, including help with reading and mathematics, to accelerate the progress of these learners. However, these strategies are at an early stage and, as a consequence, it is too early to see any impact.

The quality of teaching

There has been a high turnover of teaching staff since the last monitoring visit, which has resulted in some pupils being taught by many different teachers. Until recently, arrangements to cover absence have been made on a short-term basis, partially due to difficulties recruiting staff. The new arrangements since April are bringing a little more continuity, but a more stable arrangement in every class has yet to be established.

Actions to improve teaching, whilst appropriate and well judged, have been hampered because there have been so many staff changes. Long-standing teachers have benefited from training, but many new staff have not received the same level of guidance. Teachers do not always match activities to the abilities of learners accurately and, as result, learning opportunities are missed, with some pupils completing work very quickly because of a lack of sufficient challenge. Too often pupils complete the same work. That said, there are fewer examples of inadequate teaching now and more that is good. In the best lessons, opportunities to promote good quality learning are maximised by offering structure and purpose to every individual's activities. As a result, pupils work hard and achieve well.

As well as adjusting to new ways of working, teachers have received a range of appropriate training in order to develop their professional skills. However, leaders now need to ensure that recently appointed teachers also have support and time to become familiar with leaders' expectations and the school's procedures. This will then ensure a more consistent approach. For example, the new marking policy is implemented in all classes but more effectively in some than others. Some pupils are not given guidance on how their work can be improved or encouraged to correct errors. In the best practice, misconceptions and repeated errors are noted and pupils have a chance to practise these skills, learning from their mistakes, and, as a result, develop their skills and understanding.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Leaders have introduced new systems for monitoring behaviour, adopting a new systematic approach for recording incidents of poor behaviour. Episodes of misbehaviour are now recorded in more detail and there are appropriate follow up actions. Local authority support has strengthened the provision for pupils with particularly challenging behaviour. As a result, these pupils are now well supported and occasional poor behaviour is not allowed to disturb the learning of others.

The school has very recently begun to provide well-targeted additional support to some pupils by teaching assistants. As a result, pupils' behaviour around school has improved and adults model appropriately what is expected. However, behaviour in lessons can still be unsettled and basic routines are not yet established. As a result, pupils are not always fully attentive and some teachers fail to address this situation effectively. In some classes, pupils are properly engaged in their learning. This is because activities are planned which sustain their interest and attention, and tasks are well matched to their abilities.

Attendance has slowly improved since the previous inspection. There are now clear systems established for working with families and, as a result, persistent absence is reducing. Targeted work with those pupils whose attendance has been typically poor has had a positive impact. The attendance officer works closely with individual families and offers timely and appropriate support; many pupils have improved their attendance to above 95%. Strategies to improve attendance are beginning to have a positive impact, but punctuality remains erratic.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher show determination and commitment to improving the school; both command the confidence of the local authority and members of the interim executive board. The need to improve the stability and quality of teaching for all pupils is fully understood by senior leaders and members of the interim executive board. Since the previous monitoring inspection there have been notable changes so that senior leaders and members of the interim executive board now gain a more thorough and realistic understanding of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. A particular focus on Year 2 and the Early Years Foundation Stage has led to better outcomes for these children.

The senior leadership team has been restructured and is now more fit for purpose. As a result, staff are more confident and better engaged in school improvement work. One member of staff summed up by saying, 'We don't want to just watch the journey; we want to be part of it.'

Members of the interim executive board have a good understanding of the school and the challenges that it faces. The interim executive board has been energetic in seeking the views of parents and responding to issues raised. A number of meetings have been held and the improvement areas highlighted at the last inspection are

kept under close scrutiny; members of the interim executive board offer appropriate challenge to school leaders.

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support to the school. Visits to the school are regular and frequent and provide helpful support in checking the quality of teaching and learning. Local authority representatives have worked closely with school leaders in order to develop their skills in checking on the quality of teaching through scrutinising pupils' work and visiting lessons. The local authority's notes of visits are particularly helpful to school leaders and teachers as they report, in detail, the progress that pupils are making and the levels they are attaining.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose but it needs to be updated and more closely aligned with the school's development plan. This will help all leaders measure the impact of actions on the outcomes for pupils.