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2 May 2014

Mrs J Heyes,
The Acting Executive Headteacher
Byron Primary School
Byron Road
Gillingham
ME7 5XX

Dear Mrs Heyes

Special measures monitoring inspection of Byron Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 May 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 and the head of school 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 January 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the acting head of school, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and a group of pupils. I also met with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and an officer from the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

There have been some changes to the leadership structure of the school since the section 5 inspection. The leadership roles of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been enhanced and an acting head of school has been appointed full time. You have therefore reduced the number of days that you spend at Byron Primary to two and a half days each week.

There have not been any significant changes to the teaching staff since the previous inspection.

Formal consultation on the school's conversion to academy status has begun.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The school's capacity for improvement has been enhanced significantly since the section 5 inspection in January. You have made good use of the talents and expertise of the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher and their contribution to the school's drive for improvement is increasing as they grow in confidence. The recent arrival of an experienced acting head of school has added further capacity to the team. The leadership team works closely together with a clear and urgent sense of purpose. You communicate your high expectations of staff and pupils plainly. Although teachers have found the pace of change quite challenging, they have responded positively to the well-structured programme of support and training provided so far. Teachers now understand the key areas of their practice that need to be improved and are receiving the necessary help and guidance to develop their skills.

You responded quickly to the findings of the section 5 inspection and worked closely with the officer from the local authority to draw up a coherent school improvement plan even before the inspection report was published. This meant little time was lost and the drive for improvement started promptly. Clear short- and long-term targets for pupils' achievement in the plan have been agreed with the local authority. Actions are logically sequenced and are spread through each term so that staff are not too overloaded with new initiatives. A recent review of progress showed that most actions scheduled for the spring term were completed as planned. It is clear that some initiatives, such as the writing project that was started in February, have already had a positive impact on pupils' progress.

There is a clear focus on the learning and progress of all pupils, including those who are at risk of underachievement. Senior leaders have worked hard to review all the school's information on pupils' achievement and are confident that they now have accurate records of each pupil's attainment and of their progress over time. Tracking systems have been updated and improved so that teachers can spot any underachievement more quickly.

A revised programme of monthly meetings of the full governing body ensures that all governors are kept fully informed about the school's progress. You also provide comprehensive written reports to the governing body about the quality of teaching in the school and about pupils' achievement. You have supported the governing body to draw up a policy for school visits and governors are beginning to become more involved in this aspect of their role. Governors need further support and training to be fully effective. Although dates have been set, the external review of

the governing body and the review of the school's use of the pupil premium that were recommended at the time of the section 5 inspection have not yet taken place.

The officer from the local authority has a good working relationship with the school and regular planning meetings ensure that support from consultants is well targeted and timely. The local authority's statement of action indicates that senior officers will evaluate the school's progress at 'focused achievement board' meetings. The intervals for these meetings are not recorded on the statement of action and dates for the current term have not yet been shared with the school.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint two newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Melanie Cox
Additional Inspector