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Libby Banks
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Banks

Special measures monitoring inspection of Redhill Primary School

Following my visit with Mark Sims, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 7–8 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 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 November 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 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 Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector (Senior)

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and use what they already know about pupils to set demanding work
 - teachers advise pupils on how to make good progress in lessons
 - teachers tell pupils what to do to improve, and make sure pupils act on this advice, when marking work
 - teachers check pupils' understanding throughout lessons and correct any misunderstandings straight away
 - support staff are used effectively in class to support pupils' learning
 - topics interest boys as well as girls and give all groups of pupils opportunities to develop their ability to work on their own without help from the teacher
 - pupils have more opportunities to practise reading and writing across all subjects.

- Improve the behaviour of pupils and reduce the number of exclusions by:
 - using the school's behaviour policy consistently
 - giving pupils interesting and relevant activities in lessons so that they want to learn
 - providing planned opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in lessons.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that senior and other leaders implement the headteacher's vision for the school
 - ensuring that teachers with leadership responsibilities understand how data can be used to identify where there are weaknesses in provision and take action to help colleagues improve their teaching
 - checking regularly that actions taken are having the expected impact on how well pupils are doing
 - holding staff to account for increasing rates of pupils' progress over time through rigorous management of teachers' performance.

- Ensure that the governing body checks:
 - whether the pupil premium funding is used effectively to make a difference to raising standards for eligible pupils
 - how well the performance of teachers is managed and linked to their salary progression.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 7–8 May 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a wide range of documents and met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, the Chair and several other members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. They examined pupils' books, heard some pupils read and reviewed the school's data on the progress made by pupils.

Context

Since the previous inspection, governors have appointed a new, permanent deputy headteacher who leads mathematics and special educational needs. Two further teaching appointments have been made. At the time of this inspection, several teachers were still employed on temporary contracts; one teacher was on sick leave and there was a vacancy for a permanent teacher of Year 1. The school currently employs one newly qualified teacher who is due to complete probation at the end of the academic year.

The school is preparing for the migration to a brand new school building at the start of July 2014.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain low across the school compared to national expectations, and particularly so for the most able pupils. Despite this, significant improvements are evident in pupils' reading ages and in their mathematical knowledge. For example, in October 2013, nine out of the 27 Year 6 pupils had a reading age in line with or above birthday age. In contrast, by April 2014, all but four pupils had reading ages in line with birthday ages or above. The four pupils still behind in reading have nevertheless made gains, two having exceeded expected progress. A similar picture exists in other classes and year groups except for Years 1 and 5, where pupils' initial progress has not been sustained over this academic year.

The improvement in pupils' reading abilities is evident in lessons. Pupils were observed reading textbooks, fiction books and worksheets with relative ease. Indeed, during the guided reading sessions observed, although the pupils were well grouped according to reading ability, it was clear that the most able readers could be challenged further. One or two reported finding the books they were reading 'too easy'. Leaders are aware that raising pupils' reading ages to at least their birthday age is simply the foundation on which to build pupils' understanding and wider reading skills. Nevertheless, the improvements in reading have turned around the

educational experience, and aspirations, of many pupils. Inspectors talked to pupils who beamed with delight when talking about their new-found reading prowess. In several instances, the improvements in reading had had a very positive knock-on effect on their attendance and their behaviour.

Improvements in mathematics are also evident, especially in pupils' understanding of place value and decimals. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils were asked 'The answer is 7.1. What's the question?' They generated a wide range of correct responses including: $71/10$; $5.1+2$; $2.8+4.3$; 0.71×10 and 0.071×100 . Then they had to invert the operations. Their responses displayed a much stronger grasp of the number system than seen during previous inspections. Pupils' mathematics books cover more topics and there is more work in them than seen previously. Younger pupils have a stronger grasp of number bonds and of the place value system. Year 2 pupils were observed setting out correctly and completing vertical addition sums containing hundreds, tens and ones which required them to swap from one column to another. They too were asked to complete the inverse operations and did so. One exclaimed, 'I get it now.'

Pupils' writing skills still lag behind those of reading and mathematics, although they are writing more and writing more frequently. They have more opportunities to correct their work, such as spelling errors, and to respond to teachers' comments. The work, however, still looks untidy and most pupils have an ill-formed writing script. Too little attention is paid to letter formation and handwriting across the school, from the Early Years Foundation Stage upwards. More attention is paid to sentence construction and more pupils could explain to inspectors what a sentence must contain.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making good progress in acquiring early reading skills. Children in both the Nursery and the Reception Class are further ahead at this point in the year than previous year groups. Some Nursery children are learning initial sounds and blending them to read simple words.

Many pupils are no longer identified as having special educational needs because of the progress they have made. The majority of these pupils are now making expected progress and some are exceeding it.

The quality of teaching

The pupils' work and the learning in lessons observed during this inspection show that the quality of teaching has improved, although it is not yet good.

Key features of the teaching now include:

- teachers' higher expectations of what pupils can and will do
- greater challenge in the work set

- work pitched at more appropriate levels, based on more regular and diagnostic assessment by teachers
- more encouragement for pupils to respond to teachers' comments
- teachers following agreed systems and approaches more closely
- a strong focus on the use of high-quality children's literature to teach literacy, using novels which capture pupils' imagination
- an overall improvement in the general way in which pupils' behaviour is managed so that the majority respond to instructions and set to work quickly.

However, during this inspection, it was clear that across the school a minority of pupils, mainly but not exclusively boys, are not responding appropriately to the increased rigour, higher expectations and work ethic now prevalent in lessons. These pupils can do the work, which is set at an appropriate level for them, but they lack the skills of application and resilience required to settle down to work on their own. They have become too dependent on adult support when working. Consequently, they give up too easily when faced with a piece of work, expect too much adult support and at times try to disrupt the lesson to get attention. Leaders recognise that staff need further training to manage and modify these pupils' responses and behaviour when required to work on their own.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Incidents of fixed-term exclusion have reduced considerably, from 66 in the last complete reporting year to 20 currently. The 20 incidents relate to three pupils, two of whom have now left the school. There have been two permanent exclusions this year; an increase on the previous year.

Attendance is improving but remains below the national average based on the year to date (September 2013 to 7 May 2014). Currently, the attendance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is better than that of other pupils. Persistent absence remains high but the school has recently engaged in an attendance pilot organised by Staffordshire Local Authority which aims to tackle the issue. The number of bullying incidents is reducing; where bullying occurs it is dealt with effectively. The number of racist incidents has also fallen; there have been fewer this year than last year. Exclusively these are incidents of name-calling.

The school's written behaviour policy is too long and not particularly parent-friendly. It is, however, detailed with clear steps to follow and clear examples of rewards.

The school's systems for managing pupils' general behaviour are having a positive impact. There are several examples of former regular offenders not receiving further fixed-term exclusions in recent months. Behaviour around the school and out of classrooms is improved. Relationships between staff and children and between children themselves are good. The school and the playground are safe environments. Inspectors noted, however, that too many pupils seem tired and

listless in lessons and in the playground, and lacked initiative to generate their own games and activities.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The two new appointments to the senior leadership team are good additions. The new deputy headteacher and the literacy leader know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They have completed a thorough and accurate evaluation of the school and have clear priorities for further development. Both lead by example in the classroom. Both are experienced in their leadership roles and bring to the school much needed strength and expertise. They have each observed lessons, judged the quality of teaching and given feedback, including inadequate judgements when necessary. They are providing direct feedback to colleagues and the impact is clear to see in the stronger profile of teaching across the school.

The headteacher remains resolute and determined. She continues to provide clear direction for the school and challenges and supports the senior leaders. She has their confidence and respect. She too is a good teacher and leads by example. Now that she has a senior leadership team in place, she is more able to delegate responsibilities to others and focus more on strategic matters. She has ensured that agreed school systems have greater rigour and that key records are maintained appropriately. A lack of analysis, evaluation and summary of some data limits her ability to review strategically.

Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and what still needs to be done. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to the headteacher. They acknowledge that the unfilled permanent staff positions remain a stumbling block to the school's continued progress.

Given the relatively recent establishment of the senior leadership team, it is too early to see sustained impact on academic standards and the quality of teaching.

External support

The local authority and school have an improving relationship. The authority has provided good support for the Early Years Foundation Stage and has planned a five-day training package on mathematics for the whole school. The local authority's Core Group Review meeting about the school, at which the chair of governors and the headteacher are present, is rigorous and tackles the right issues. The school maintains its membership of The Chase Co-operative Learning Trust, through which it finds support for teaching and staffing.