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Mrs Michelle Johnstone
Executive Headteacher
Etruscan Primary School
Dundee Road
Etruria
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST1 4BS

Dear Mrs Johnstone

Special measures monitoring inspection of Etruscan Primary School

Following my visit with Christine Malone Her Majesty's Inspector and Jennifer Platt, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 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 Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Corporate Director of People Services for Stoke on-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector, Senior

Annex

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

- Raise the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2, so that pupils' behaviour improves and their progress accelerates, especially in writing, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of pupils, especially the more able
 - use assessment information to provide engaging and challenging activities that build upon what pupils already know, understand and can do
 - plan lessons that focus on pupils' learning and not just on the activities they will do
 - do not use an excessive amount of time introducing lessons or explaining activities
 - give pupils clear guidance when marking their work about what they need to do to improve, and increase the opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' comments so that they can learn from their mistakes
 - stimulate pupils' imaginations so that they are motivated to write
 - give pupils more opportunities to write at length in literacy lessons and in subjects such as history and geography.

- Use the pupil premium funding to accelerate rapidly the progress of those pupils known to be eligible for this additional support.

- Work with parents to improve attendance to at least the national average.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - all leaders and managers make regular checks to ensure that the improvement strategies are improving teaching and raising achievement
 - all leaders develop their skills of checking and improving the teaching and so raise achievement in their areas of responsibility
 - the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is tracked effectively so that leaders have an accurate view of their achievement
 - all plans for improvement are sharply focused on improving pupils' achievement and have measurable outcomes that can be monitored regularly
 - governors develop their skills so that they can effectively check the work of the school and hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - an external review of governance is undertaken, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20-21 May 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a wide range of documents and met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the inclusion leader, members of the IEB and a representative of the local authority. They met with the home-school liaison worker and the education welfare officer. They also talked to pupils, parents and staff and scrutinised the school's data on the progress pupils are making. Inspectors observed one assembly and observed behaviour around the school, during lessons and at break times.

Context

There have been a number of changes in staffing since the first monitoring inspection. An assistant headteacher joined the school in February; three teachers joined the school at the beginning of the summer term and two further appointments have been made to commence in September 2014. One teacher has resigned and will leave the school at the end of the summer term. The school has one permanent, full time teaching post vacant. A staffing restructure is currently being undertaken.

Following the removal of the governing body, an IEB has been established. The IEB has ratified the decision for the deputy headteacher to become the head of school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain below average in Key Stages 1 and 2. They are rising faster in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Pupils are making accelerated progress in Years 5 and 6. Despite this, the results in the 2014 national tests for 11-year-olds are again predicted to be lower than the 2013 government floor standards.

In Key Stage 1, standards remain too low and are not rising fast enough; pupils' writing and mathematics are especially weak. Results of the 2014 national assessments for seven-year-olds are predicted to be below national averages again as are the figures for the Year 1 check on pupils' phonic knowledge (letters and the sounds they make). In the Early Years Foundation Stage, outcomes are predicted to be close to the national figures for the end of the Reception Year, similar to previous years.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, staff have analysed the reading data from the standardised tests they now use. The figures show that in Year 3, only a quarter of pupils have a reading age in line with, or above, their birthday age. A significant number of pupils have reading ages three or more years behind their birthday age; most are more than 12 months behind. The figures are slightly better in each later

year group: in Year 4, for example, 52% of pupils have a reading age in line with, or above, their birthday age and in Year 5, the figure is 62%. The figures confirm the general picture that pupils' attainment and progress are better in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. A similar picture emerges from the data that the school has recently collated from the standardised mathematics test undertaken by pupils in Years 2 to 5.

The work observed in lessons and in books shows that pupils are making better progress than was previously the case. For example, as a result of the changes to the way that reading is taught, pupils are reading many more books, at length and more frequently. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage are learning phonics daily and acquiring the skills to read, including children in the Nursery. All early readers, and those pupils who have not yet reached the expected standard for seven-year-olds, are given decodable books to read in school and at home so that they can practise the phonics skills they are learning. Inspectors observed Reception children writing phonically acceptable spellings for words such as insulation, plastic and wood, displaying their newly acquired skills. Both Nursery and Reception cohorts are further on in learning to read than were their counterparts at this point last year.

Writing skills remain very poor however, especially in Key Stage 1. There is no agreed way to teach writing and, in some classes, the methods used are over complicated. For example, inspectors observed the same writing lesson being taught in two parallel Key Stage 1 classes. In one class, pupils were required to write on photocopied sheets, into small boxes, to write a report. This approach denied pupils the opportunity to practise writing on lined paper, in full sentences, ensuring that their handwriting stayed within and on the lines and that letters were of the correct size and formation - all necessary skills that need to be mastered at this age. It also denied pupils the opportunity to see how paragraphs are built up on a page. In contrast, in the neighbouring classroom, pupils wrote their sentences directly into a lined book, building up sections of text. By the end of the lesson, most had written a reasonable length and several were excited and proud enough to read out their work to the rest of the class. Across the school, too often, writing books contain uncorrected grammar and spelling mistakes and marking focuses almost entirely on the genre related objectives, such as use of connectives.

Presentation of work in English and mathematics books has improved though, especially in Key Stage 2. The greatest improvement in pupils' work was seen in upper Key Stage 2 in mathematics. For example, Year 5 pupils are completing a significantly greater volume of work in their books, the most able Year 6 pupils are starting the Year 7 programme of study, and all pupils are responding well to the greater challenge and higher expectations of them. Sharper assessment and teaching continue to reveal though further, historic gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, for example in their understanding of 'area' and why we use the formula $A=L \times W$.

Pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding), those who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are more clearly identified and supported with better targeted programmes so they too are making better progress in lessons than was previously the case. For example, all pupils are heard to read daily or thrice weekly or weekly according to need. The school's standardised data show that, in some classes, pupils supported by the pupil premium are attaining as well as their classmates and in some cases better, for example in Year 5 mathematics. School leaders do not yet have reliable data by which to assess rates of progress by specific groups, although they have established a clear baseline from which to measure progress.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved. Evidence from pupils' books, records and from lessons observed shows that almost all inadequate teaching has been eradicated. There is clear evidence that much of the teaching requires improvement still but that some is good and better, especially in Years 5 and 6. The teaching of mathematics in upper Key Stage 2 is a particular strength. The new teaching appointments to the school, in upper Key Stage 2, are making a significant contribution to pupils making accelerated progress in these year groups.

Changes to staffing in the Early Years Foundation Stage are also having a significant, positive impact. The provision is sharper and much better aligned to the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and the greater focus on literacy and reading across the curriculum is paying dividends. For example, inspectors observed good examples of the use of fiction and non-fiction books to support pupils' understanding of the world and local geography.

The most significant change since the previous monitoring inspection has been the wide-ranging overhaul of the teaching of reading. This has included:

- the introduction of the teaching of phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1
- the purchase and introduction of a new scheme to teach phonics and early reading
- £27,000 spent on the purchase of sets of books for guided reading and a scheme for individual reading
- literacy training and further training for all staff
- the establishment of a new library with book donations from pupils and parents
- a full review of the identification of underachieving pupils and new support arrangements.

The impact of these changes is clearly evident in pupils' increased enjoyment of reading, their engagement in lessons and improving levels of reading stamina. Pupils can sit and read quietly for longer periods of time. They can talk about the wider range of books they are reading.

Individual class timetables do not follow a similar format and it is not always clear from them when collective worship takes place or when the registration periods start and finish. In Key Stages 1 and 2, classes spend approximately 15 minutes each day on 'SODA' (start of day activities). This is not always an effective use of time and does not contribute sufficiently well enough to pupils' learning. According to some Key Stage 1 timetables, as much as 50% of the week's teaching time is devoted to various English lessons. Given the longstanding low standards, this excessive amount of time is having no discernible impact on standards of reading and writing. If the timetables are accurate, then it raises questions about the extent to which other subjects of the National Curriculum are covered, as there appears to be too little time to teach them well enough.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance is improving. Attendance figures are moving closer to the national. The school buys the services of an education welfare officer for half a day each week. This officer works with the home-school liaison worker targeting specific pupils and families. The education welfare officer provides very good value for money and is having a discernible impact on attendance. Displays in school highlight the need for good attendance and promote healthy competition between classes.

Systems for managing pupils' behaviour are now well established and are much clearer to staff, pupils and parents. Examination of the behaviour logs reveals that there is still a large number of low-level incidents recorded, such as pushing, kicking and name calling – which to some pupils is bullying. Most of the incidents recorded relate to Key Stage 2, specifically Years 3 and 4, and occur out of class. Some of the recorded name-calling incidents are racist but these are not also recorded in the racist incident log. Inspectors observed mostly good behaviour in lessons and around the school, although there were examples of low-level off-task behaviour in less-effective lessons.

The school meets its statutory obligations in respect of safeguarding.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher is driving forward rapid improvement. There is visible impact of her work in the school: the environment is cleaner and brighter; there is a new library; staff morale is better; and pupils are responding positively to the changes. She is focused and very clear about priorities to be tackled.

Her joint working with the new head of school is proving to be effective. She is providing the head of school with a very good role model for further development. The governing body has been disbanded and an IEB installed. The IEB comprises a small number of professional people and parents who are able and willing to make important decisions and act upon them quickly. They and the executive headteacher

recognise that developing middle leaders and subject leaders is the next high priority.

Together, IEB members, the executive headteacher and head of school, have very quickly brought about important changes in the school. They have focused on staffing: restructuring the teaching and support team; reviewing contracts; establishing a new culture for teaching and learning in the school; and forging links with the partner school, St Mark's CE Primary. St Mark's staff have provided training for Etruscan staff on a wide range of issues; the close support and cooperation between the two schools are benefiting Etruscan staff and pupils, including the newly qualified teacher. As a result, IEB members and senior leaders have ensured that there are higher expectations of staff and pupils and that 'non-negotiables' of classroom management and teaching are in place.

External support

Support from the local authority remains good; the authority continues to support the partnership between the two schools. A local authority officer recently undertook a review of the school's progress and her judgement was accurate. The Education Welfare Officer Service provides very good value for the school and is proving very effective in helping the school to improve attendance. The IEB and executive headteacher have had good support from the human resources department at the local authority.