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Gary Law
Headteacher
St White's Primary School
St White's Road
Cinderford
GL14 3DH

Dear Mr Law

Special measures monitoring inspection of St White's Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 June 2014 with Paul Jones, Associate Inspector, 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 December 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, in addition to our meetings and the visits to all classrooms that we carried out together, I had a discussion with three members of the governing body, including staff governors. As the Chair of the Governing Body was away on the day I was in the school, I spoke with him on the telephone the day before my visit. I also held a meeting with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action and considered the reports following the reviews of the governing body and the school's use of the funding for pupils in receipt of the pupil premium. Together with this, I examined the reports produced following the two reviews of the progress at the school which have been undertaken by the local authority since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school's raising attainment plan and examined the record of statutory checks on staff and volunteers.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in December, there have been significant changes in the membership of the governing body. The Chair of the Governing Body changed in April and altogether four governors have joined the school since the inspection. There has been one addition to the administrative staff at the school and the clerk to the governors has been appointed. Currently, one member of the teaching staff is on maternity leave with her class being taught until the end of term by a supply teacher.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You, your staff and governors are clearly committed to improvement. Since the inspection, there have been a range of developments and activities, some brokered or led by the local authority, which have helped to strengthen systems within in the school, including the tracking of the progress that pupils make. The frequency of monitoring has increased to take place each term. Linked to this development, the meetings with class teachers to discuss the progress of individuals and groups are synchronised with the progress-tracking cycle and attended by senior and middle leaders, class teachers and teaching assistants. This represents the development of a more cohesive approach in order to support the improvement of the academic progress made by pupils. There have been significant changes in terms of governance. The review of governance recommended in the inspection report has been completed and the report published recently. The local authority has also completed the review of the school's use of the pupil premium. In addition, the local authority has undertaken two reviews of the progress that the school has made since the inspection as part of its cycle for monitoring schools causing concern. These reports and reviews emphasise the need for the school to accelerate and focus improvements. They contain important recommendations to support improvement in specific areas and particularly the strategic leadership of the school.

As its main planning tool, the school has developed the raising attainment plan to focus on the findings and recommendations from the inspection. This is a comprehensive document with considerable detail on objectives, impact expected, activities and monitoring arrangements. This large document is completed each term. Elements of the plan are a useful evaluative tool. However, overall it has become over annotated, unwieldy and not fit for purpose. In its current form, it is not a workable plan and reference document that can be used easily by staff and governors. The plan does not provide a clear and specific planning timetable of actions to tackle the school's weaknesses noted in the last report. Indicators of how success will be measured are complex with a lack of clear milestones over time by which progress can be evaluated. It is not sufficiently clear how and when leaders, including the governing body, will check the difference that actions make to pupils'

learning and the quality of teaching. As it stands, the raising attainment plan does not support the strategic leadership of the school effectively.

The local authority has provided initial support promptly. The school intervention adviser has worked with the headteacher to develop a range of help for the school. This includes a partnership with a successful local school to support leadership and management overall, and particularly for phase and subject leaders. The local authority has also brokered specific support including regular reviews of teaching and learning. The statement of action promotes the school's improvement well. It identifies clear actions, the individuals responsible for each activity and how these will be monitored. There is a clear timescale for improvement and progress is monitored by senior officers appropriately. The financial allocations for the resources needed for actions led or brokered by the local authority are clearly identified. Overall, the local authority has provided an effective balance of support and challenge.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

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

The school's raising attainment 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner
Her Majesty's Inspector