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20 June 2014

Duncan Cocker
Headteacher
Villiers Primary School
Prouds Lane
Bilston
WV14 6PR

Dear Mr Cocker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Villiers Primary School

Following my visit with Deidre Lyddy, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18–19 June 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 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 without further reference to Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 Wolverhampton.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve teaching so that none is inadequate and much more is good or better by ensuring that teachers:
 - are precise about what they want each group of pupils to learn and how they are going to check how successful they have been
 - make accurate use of information about what pupils already know and can do to plan work which challenges all groups of pupils and helps learning to move at a brisk pace
 - use time more efficiently in lessons so that pupils spend more time actively engaged in, and making decisions about their own learning
 - plan more lessons that excite pupils and engage their curiosity
 - use teaching assistants and other adults more effectively, so none of their time is wasted, and check that their support is helping pupils make better progress
 - use marking to inform pupils about how well they are doing against their targets and what they need to do to improve their work.

- Raise standards in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring that the teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds) is more closely matched to pupils' abilities and moves learning on more quickly
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop the skills of writing at length in different subjects.

- Improve achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that teachers provide appropriate opportunities for children to explore and develop their own ideas.

- Improve leadership and management and increase the pace of school improvement by:
 - implementing more rigorous checks on the accuracy of assessments of attainment and progress made by teachers in all year groups
 - improving the accuracy of school self-evaluation by rigorously analysing all available information
 - implementing more rigorous checks on teaching that focus on how successful teaching is at moving learning on and how the teacher can improve their practice
 - improving the attendance of pupils, working with families to reduce the number of pupils who are absent for more than 15% of sessions.

- Improve governance by ensuring that members of the governing body:
 - are better informed about the school's performance
 - use the information to set more challenging targets for improvement
 - actively check that improvements that are detailed in development plans are having the intended effect on pupils' achievement and wellbeing
 - make regular checks on all welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 18–19 June 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including information about pupils' achievement and records of the checks made on the quality of teaching. Five of the lesson observations were conducted jointly with the deputy headteacher. Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders, a group of staff, three representatives from the governing body and a local authority representative. In addition to this, inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, talked to some parents at the beginning of the school day and spoke on the telephone with a member of the governing body.

Context

Since the second monitoring inspection a new deputy headteacher has taken up post. Two teaching assistants have been appointed, one to work in a Reception class and one in Year 2. One teacher has returned from maternity leave. Three teachers will be leaving the school in July.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress has continued to improve in most year groups, with an increasing proportion of pupils making the progress that is expected nationally and some making faster progress. Progress in mathematics in Key Stage 1 and progress in writing in Year 6 have been particularly strong since the last monitoring visit. However, it is still inconsistent between classes and subjects and many pupils' standards remain below the levels expected for their age. Rates of progress differ across the school because of variations in teaching. Accelerating progress further remains a key priority for the school.

Progress in writing is improving because pupils are writing more regularly and at greater length. However, teachers do not routinely make sure pupils go back and improve their writing in response to the advice they give.

Increasing numbers of children in the Reception classes are making good progress. The school's information, which has been checked by the local authority, shows that the proportion of children on track to reach the expected standard at the end of the year is above the national average. The progress of children in Nursery is improving but not as rapidly as that seen in the Reception classes.

The proportion of pupils on track to reach the expected standard in the phonics check in Year 1 has doubled compared with last year. This is as a result of improved teaching.

Leaders are tracking pupils' progress and attainment regularly. As a result of effective training, teachers are assessing pupils' abilities more accurately. Regular reviews of pupils' progress with teachers are well established and this is ensuring that any pupils making insufficient progress are identified quickly. However, the summary of achievement data for different groups of pupils that was presented to Her Majesty's Inspector during the inspection contained some errors. This made it difficult for senior leaders to easily demonstrate the improvements that were evident in pupils' books and in observations of teaching.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve. This is as a result of effective training and regular feedback from senior leaders.

All teachers have a clear understanding that they must plan appropriate work for pupils of different abilities. Some teachers are more skilled at this than others. Where learning is most effective, work is set at the right level of difficulty and teachers regularly check how well pupils are progressing with tasks and move them on to more difficult work as soon as they are ready. In these lessons, learning is well paced and resources are used effectively to engage and support pupils. In addition pupils know what they need to do to be successful. For example, in one lesson observed, pupils made a list of things they would need to do to add together coins. This enabled them to make good progress. Pupils say that lessons are becoming more fun and that they more often enjoy them.

Where learning is slower the questions teachers use do not sufficiently challenge or probe pupils' thinking. Additionally, teachers do not give pupils enough thinking time and provide the answer too quickly.

Senior leaders have implemented an effective structure for the teaching of reading. Progress in reading is improving because pupils are increasingly provided with precise tasks that develop specific reading skills. Pupils told inspectors that these lessons introduced them to books and authors that they would not usually read.

In most classes teaching assistants are being effectively deployed. Teachers' planning indicates which groups of pupils teaching assistants will work with. Where learning is most effective, teaching assistants know precisely what pupils should achieve by the end of the lesson and use effective questions to guide pupils through their learning.

The quality of teaching in Reception is good and an increasing proportion of pupils are making good progress. Children's progress in Nursery is slower because teaching has not been good enough over a sustained period of time. The Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor learning area has improved since the last monitoring inspection and the equipment that has been installed provides a range of

opportunities for children's physical development to be improved, although children do not yet have access to a sufficiently wide range of outdoor activities. Teaching assistants in Reception help children to learn new things through careful and precise questioning. However, in Nursery the balance between assessing children's development and supporting their learning has not been achieved.

Teachers' marking has improved and in most classes pupils are provided with helpful and precise guidance. However, this is not having enough impact on progress because pupils are rarely acting on this advice by improving or correcting their work. Teachers' expectations of pupils' handwriting and presentation are too low and many work books are scruffy because pupils do not try their best with their written work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and sensible when they move around the school and are courteous to staff and visitors. Playtimes are well supervised and pupils enjoy the range of activities that are available and play well together. Some pupils told Her Majesty's Inspector that they have concerns about football games dominating the playground. In lessons, low-level disruption remains uncommon and teaching is increasingly engaging pupils' interest. As a result, pupils are more enthusiastic about their learning than at the time of the last monitoring inspection.

Attendance continues to be above average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. This is because the systems for following up absence are effective and the rewards for good attendance motivate the pupils.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership and management continue to improve. Together, the headteacher and the new deputy headteacher have taken control of the improvement of the school and are less reliant on external support. They have a clear ambition and vision for the school. The collective determination to improve remains a positive feature of this school. Additional external help is sought where leaders assess it is required. For example, senior leaders visited a local school to learn from good practice in phonics teaching. Improvements have been made as a result.

Senior leaders continue to make regular checks on the quality of teaching and are basing their judgements on a wider range of evidence than at the time of the last inspection. They have an accurate view of the areas that still need to improve. The deputy headteacher is forensic in her analysis of teaching and has added an increased sense of urgency to the pace of improvement. The skills of other senior leaders are improving and are adding strength to the leadership and its capacity for improvement. Detailed feedback after lesson observations is helping teachers to improve their practice. Senior leaders are getting better at going back more quickly to check that their advice has been followed and that appropriate improvements

have been made. Feedback to staff after planning and pupils' work books have been scrutinised is less precise and thorough. Some teachers who are in charge of subject areas are not sufficiently involved in making checks on the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.

Pupils' rates of progress are checked regularly and teachers are acutely aware of their responsibilities to ensure that the rate of progress for all pupils continues to accelerate. Teachers have been trained to ensure that the assessments they make about pupils' attainment are accurate. Recent local authority checks show that this training has been effective.

Governors are proactive in finding out for themselves about the improvements that are being made. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and have a broadly accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors are knowledgeable about the progress being made in each year group but are less familiar with how pupils' attainment compares with national averages. Occasionally some of the information that they receive from leaders is too general and over-optimistic.

External support

The regular reviews conducted by the local authority are helpful and the reports that are produced are informative and evaluative. Effective local authority support continues in the Early Years Foundation Stage.