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Chris Dey and Phil Calloway
Interim Headteachers
Woodlea Primary School
Atholl Road
Whitehill
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Hampshire
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Dear Mrs Dey and Mr Calloway

Special measures monitoring inspection of Woodlea Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17–18 June 2014 with Stephanie Matthews, additional 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 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 October 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely
Siân Thornton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to secure rapid progress for all groups of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 1, by ensuring all teachers:
 - receive training to help them understand the capabilities of the groups of pupils they teach and how to use assessment information well, so that they can plan appropriate learning activities
 - plan interesting activities that reflect pupils' interests and aptitudes so that they commit to learning and behave consistently well in lessons
 - plan activities in lessons that follow on logically so that there is a clear development in the way pupils learn about new ideas and they can build on what they know
 - explain what pupils will be learning in simple language so that all pupils can understand what is expected of them
 - develop their questioning skills so that they gain a better understanding of how well pupils are learning and adapt lessons accordingly, depending on pupils' responses
 - set pupils targets and involve them in checking on their progress so that they understand how to improve
 - provide opportunities for pupils to follow up on teachers' guidance in the marking of their books so that they learn by making corrections to their work.

- Raise pupils' attainment by:
 - ensuring pupils practise blending the sounds made by different letters consistently so that they can read unfamiliar words successfully
 - giving pupils effective opportunities to write about their own ideas at length
 - providing mathematical problems that allow pupils to calculate answers for themselves
 - ensuring children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given imaginative activities and can interact with adults who encourage them to explore their ideas further by themselves.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - introducing a rigorous monitoring schedule so that senior leaders can more accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the school
 - ensuring senior leaders enable middle leaders to check the quality of provision and outcomes in their areas of responsibility
 - making sure middle leaders analyse the information they gather to determine priorities for improvement and produce action plans to address these priorities

- assessing children's current levels of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage and use this information to plan relevant activities that meet all children's developmental needs
- ensuring senior leaders hold staff to account for using information about pupils' progress to plan effective lessons that have a positive impact on pupils' learning
- ensuring governors receive all the information they need and that they use this more effectively to hold all leaders to account.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 June 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, and met with the interim headteachers and the deputy headteacher. Meetings were also held with subject leaders and the special educational needs co-ordinator, and with members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors met with groups of pupils, and spoke with parents and carers at the start of both days.

Context

The interim headteachers will leave the school at the end of this term. The governing body is due to conduct a second round of interviews for a permanent headteacher before the end of June. The local authority has made contingency plans for new interim leadership for the autumn term.

The Year 1 class teacher left at Easter. Since then, the class has been taught by the deputy headteacher in partnership with a new, part-time teacher. Teachers from five classes will be leaving the school at the end of the term. This includes the deputy headteacher and the English and mathematics leaders. The school has already appointed two experienced teachers to start in September, both as assistant headteachers. The remaining teacher vacancies are being advertised.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are making better progress in learning about letters and sounds. As a result, they are able to read with increasing fluency and spell more accurately. They can now write at greater length and read a wider range of books. In Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, pupils have increasing opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects. This is helping them develop their spelling and grammar more effectively, and extending their ability and confidence to express their own ideas in writing.

All pupils now have specific targets in English and mathematics. These are attached to pupils' exercise books. Pupils know them and can explain what they mean. Where this system is used well, pupils are urged on by ambitious statements, which clearly explain what they need to do to achieve the next level in their learning. However, some targets set for older pupils are too basic, for instance focused on normal expectations for the use of simple punctuation. Some of the targets for younger pupils are not expressed in simple enough language, and targets are sometimes assessed by the teacher as achieved when pupils' work does not show this well enough.

In mathematics, pupils are responding well to new, interesting opportunities to solve problems. However, these are often explored in the first instance with the support of worksheets, without sufficient time afterwards for pupils to continue with their own working in their books. This limits opportunities for pupils to consolidate or extend their learning, especially those with special educational needs and the most able.

By the end of their time in the Reception class, most pupils are prepared for the challenges and opportunities of Year 1 and Year 2. This is because of their readiness to learn when they came into the school and their positive attitudes and behaviour.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve and more is now good. However, while there has been significant improvement in some of the younger classes, teaching remains weaker in this area of the school.

The weekly format for lesson planning is now well established and being used consistently. Teachers now make better use of information about their pupils' progress when they plan. They are becoming more successful in planning learning at the right level for different pupils, including for those with special educational needs and the most able. Teachers increasingly record useful notes on their plans when they review lessons.

Teachers have continued to develop the way they explain to pupils "what we are learning today". Most pupils are now clear about what they are learning and how the activity they are doing helps them to achieve this. However, for some younger pupils, this is still unclear, especially when this information is presented on unhelpfully worded stickers, put into their books.

Teachers now consider more fully the questions they will use in lessons when they plan, and they increasingly advise teaching assistants about questions to use with their groups. Adults are using effective questions more frequently, to check pupils' progress during lessons, and to consolidate or extend their understanding. Questions are also used skilfully on task sheets in some classes. These arouse pupils' curiosity and maintain their interest and engagement. Unfortunately, some teaching assistants are limited in their questioning by the teacher's concern about classroom noise. In the Reception class, children are too frequently left for too long, without an adult stepping in to talk with them about their learning.

Teachers also use questions creatively when they mark pupils' work, and pupils make good use of the daily "read and respond" time they now have, to consider their teacher's feedback. Teachers' marking shows improvement across the school, and there are increasing examples of pupils writing back to their teacher, and having valuable opportunities to learn from checking others' work.

The school's approach to the teaching of letters and sounds is now more flexible. This enables teachers to focus on the specific needs of groups and individuals, and to revisit or push ahead with learning, as required. Teachers' records of pupils' progress, and the evidence of pupils' reading and writing, show that significant improvement has been achieved in this area in a relatively short time.

Teachers increasingly expect pupils to write at length and to do so in different subjects. Teachers now plan sequences of lessons to build longer pieces of writing, with opportunities to revisit and redraft earlier attempts. A recent example is the half-term focus on "writing an adventure story" in Year 5, where pupils took pride in thinking deeply about their story ideas before crafting extended stories and presenting these with care and attention to handwriting, spelling and grammar.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour has improved around the school and in lessons. Clear targets and increasingly interesting activities (especially in writing and mathematics) help them to stay more engaged in their learning. Most of the parents and carers inspectors met are confident that behaviour is good and that any difficulties are managed effectively. However, a small number of parents and carers are concerned that staff changes affect the school's ability to maintain this.

The school is alert to these concerns and making every effort to communicate with parents and carers when changes occur. Classroom records are kept of behaviour incidents, and the school accesses expert support and advice when this is required. However, the analysis of behaviour records, to check for patterns concerning the pupils involved, is too limited.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The rigorous schedule for monitoring teaching, which was introduced in the spring, has been developed further. The interim headteachers have adopted a more frequent "drop-in" system for visiting classes and providing feedback to teachers. There are clear links between the advice given to teachers and recent improvements in teaching and pupils' progress. However, these visits and the feedback given do not always focus sharply enough on the specific areas for improvement identified in the inspection report and they are not always recorded.

The school has introduced a more efficient system for recording and reviewing pupils' progress from Year 1 to Year 6. This is proving helpful to teachers when they plan, and provides senior leaders and subject leaders with better information about pupils' learning and where teaching or resources need to be further improved. However, teachers and leaders are not clear enough about the targets for pupils' progress each year or term, which they should be checking against. An improved

system has also been introduced for the Reception class. However, this is not used well enough to provide an accurate record of progress, or to inform planning.

Mathematics and English leaders' action plans are now well underway, including extensive training for staff and for these leaders. Activities have been delivered on time, and the action plans themselves have been reviewed. However, this evaluation is limited to whether activities have been completed, without checking properly for any difference they have made to the quality of teaching or to pupils' progress.

Successive interim headteachers have been clear in holding teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. Regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress now include better use of assessment information and teachers are now expected to produce their own report, before the meeting, to inform the discussion. As a result, teachers are more aware of those pupils who need to make faster progress. This makes a difference to their planning and means that they refer more frequently to the special educational needs co-ordinator for advice about meeting the needs of individual pupils.

Some parents and carers expressed concern to inspectors that staff changes might be affecting how well their children's special educational needs are identified or provided for. The school is effectively addressing these concerns. The special educational needs co-ordinator is available for parents and carers, and works efficiently on individual cases. However, the way the school checks provision for special educational needs, and the overall support and management of classroom assistance, are too limited.

Governors have continued to maintain their routine operations, while working hard to provide steady leadership during a time of change. Governors make themselves readily available to parents and carers, for example, at school events and in a recent open meeting.

In response to the review of governance last term, the governing body has changed to a more efficient structure and new governors with a suitable range of skills and experience have been recruited. Governors have recently devised a full schedule of activities to check the improvement of the school and this is now being acted upon. Records of meetings show that governors hold the school to account more effectively by asking relevant questions of senior leaders, and by requesting written reports. Recently, questions were asked in a resources committee about the progress of pupils supported by additional funding, and reports were requested from the English and mathematics leaders. However, the records of meetings do not always reflect these activities fully enough. Governors have been conscientious about their own training and development. Recently, all governors received detailed training about how to check information provided by the school about pupils' progress. Governors are considering whether the school should convert to academy status.

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support. The interim headteachers and governors value the accessibility of senior advisers, their ready advice and practical help, especially with recruitment.

Support and challenge from local authority consultants have accelerated the development of subject leaders and made a difference to the teaching of mathematics and English. Intensive support has been provided in the Reception class, where the range of activities has improved as a result. The local authority has provided a range of relevant training for governors, and recently started a review of special educational needs arrangements in the school. Meetings to check teachers' records of pupils' progress are due to be held at the school before the end of June.

The local authority has taken prompt and timely action to arrange interim leadership at the school, while ensuring that this is provided by suitably experienced senior leaders.