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30 June 2014

Mrs C Wreglesworth
The Interim Executive Headteacher
Bedgrove Junior School
Ingram Avenue
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP21 9DN

Dear Mrs Wreglesworth

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bedgrove Junior School

Following my visit with Gill Walley, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 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 the 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 appoint one newly qualified teacher 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - activities pupils are given in lessons and the targets they have are always closely matched to what they need to learn next
 - adults who support pupils in lessons prompt and question them well
 - teachers have high expectations of the amount pupils are capable of doing and learning in lessons, and challenge them to think deeply
 - pupils are actively engaged in their learning throughout the lesson
 - teachers' written comments on pupils' work tell pupils clearly what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their performance.
- Ensure that phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught systematically to pupils who still have difficulty reading.
- Make sure that pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes racist behaviour, its unacceptability and how to combat it, and that parents are properly notified of racist incidents.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring:
 - teaching is frequently and rigorously checked, and teachers given clear feedback on what to improve
 - subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator are fully involved in identifying and bringing about improvements
 - actions the school takes to improve are fully evaluated
 - judgements about how good the school is take into account a full range of evidence
 - governors hold the school's leaders fully to account for pupils' performance.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 June 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, other leaders, a group of pupils, a group of parents, three members of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative of the local authority. Twelve lessons were observed, including 10 conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked closely at a range of pupils' work. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school and at lunchtime.

Context

Following the resignation of the previous headteacher in March 2014, a new headteacher has been appointed who will start full time in September 2014, but who has been working at the school for two days a week since the beginning of June. The interim executive headteacher and the consultant headteacher will continue in these roles for the foreseeable future. A new assistant headteacher also joined the school at the beginning of June following the departure of the previous post holder.

Four teachers and one teaching assistant have left the school since the previous monitoring inspection. Two teachers, including one newly qualified teacher, and one teaching assistant have started. The school bursar has been replaced.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils are making better progress than previously. The pupils and parents spoken to during this inspection recognise that this is so. Although achievement in reading remains stronger than in writing and mathematics, pupils' progress is accelerating in all subjects. Year 3 pupils have made a good start to their time at the school. The proportions of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils now on track to make good progress by the end of Key Stage 2 are rising. Whilst Year 4 pupils' achievement has improved this year, too few are yet making rapid enough progress to address past underachievement.

Teachers are beginning to give pupils more opportunities to develop their writing and their mathematical skills across a range of subjects. In some classes pupils' presentation of their work is very good, but this is inconsistent across the school. The most able pupils are achieving more because they are being challenged increasingly well.

The progress of lower attaining pupils is generally slower than other pupils and small numbers of pupils are underachieving, including some disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and some pupils eligible for the pupil premium. However, these pupils have been identified and are now getting the extra support they need.

The quality of teaching

Teachers and teaching assistants are checking pupils' understanding during lessons much more regularly and adjusting lessons accordingly. Pupils are clearer about what they are learning in lessons and what they need to do to succeed. The level of challenge in lessons is rising overall, although inconsistencies remain because in some lessons pupils are given work that is not hard enough.

Teachers' marking is detailed and pupils are very clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Increasingly, pupils are given time to make these improvements. Teaching assistants continue to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. In the best lessons teachers and teaching assistants use their strong subject knowledge to question pupils effectively in order to extend their thinking. Such good practice is growing and is being shared more effectively across the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Teachers' effective behaviour management is becoming increasingly well established. This, along with greater levels of challenge, means that pupils are more engaged and generally concentrate well during lessons. In the best lessons pupils are hungry to learn and work purposefully with each other and on their own. While many pupils are smartly dressed, some are less so. Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance levels remain above average.

Racist incidents are low, but there has been a small number since the last monitoring inspection. They have been dealt with swiftly and well. These are isolated incidents and are not indicative of wider problems. Pupils report that there is no racism at school and that bullying is rare. Their understanding of the differences between people from different backgrounds is improving. Pupils mix and play well together at lunchtime. Enough adults supervise them around the school site but, at times, ball games played outside, particularly football, pose a potential risk to pupils' safety because they are not organised or controlled well enough.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders' effectiveness continues to improve. This has been bolstered recently by the appointment of the new headteacher. The deputy headteacher is a strong role model and is ensuring the effective use of data by other leaders and teachers. The new assistant headteacher is already leading by example in his teaching. The interim executive headteacher and consultant headteacher continue to provide strong strategic and practical senior leadership. Senior leaders have set high expectations about the rate of improvement and they have tackled weaker teaching effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants rightly receive regular feedback and training and they continue to work very hard to improve. The much improved processes for leaders' checks on teachers' performance are becoming well established.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics are having an increasingly marked impact on teaching and pupils' achievement. Year group leaders now have clear roles and responsibilities and are regularly monitoring the quality of teaching. However, their effectiveness in providing support for teachers, including offering examples of good practice in their own teaching, remains variable.

Members of the interim executive board (IEB) provide clear challenge and support for school leaders. They have quickly got to grips with the strengths of the school and the areas for further development. The IEB has a central role in evaluating the improvements of the school, including members' regular visits to the school to collect their own evidence. The IEB has successfully recruited a new headteacher. Along with the local authority, the IEB has ensured that the appropriate contractual arrangements for the remuneration of the interim executive headteacher and the consultant headteacher are now in place. However, members of the IEB do not yet contribute formally to the performance management of the interim executive headteacher and the consultant headteacher by liaising closely with the governors of Bedgrove Infant School and the local authority respectively.

External support

The school improvement adviser visits the school very regularly to provide good support, advice and challenge for school leaders. He also liaises well with the IEB. As a result, he knows the school well, including the areas that need to improve further. A number of consultants have visited the school to provide support and training for teachers. An advanced skills teacher from Bedgrove Infant School and another leading teacher brokered by the local authority are providing effective support for individual teachers. While the links with St Louis Catholic Primary School have now stopped, a strong partnership with Buckingham Primary School, now an outstanding school, has been maintained. The school is beginning to be less reliant on external support.