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4 July 2014

Mrs Barbara Deacon
King's Stanley CofE Primary School
Broad Street
King's Stanley
Stonehouse
GL10 3PN

Dear Mrs Deacon

Special measures monitoring inspection of King's Stanley CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Her Majesty's Inspector, Alan Hinchliffe, to your school on 2 and 3 July 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 that took place in May 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement 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.

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 Gloucestershire and the Diocese of Gloucester.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2, by ensuring teachers:
 - do not talk for too long and allow pupils to start their learning activities more promptly
 - assess pupils' attainment frequently and accurately, and use this information to provide activities that extend all abilities
 - make sure pupils know their targets and what they need to do to work towards them
 - give pupils sufficient opportunities to respond to their marking and make the necessary improvements.
- Improve pupils' achievement, especially in reading, by:
 - ensuring teachers teach higher-level reading skills effectively and give pupils the opportunities to apply these skills when reading in other subjects
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and reflect on their learning.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that school leaders track pupils' progress more efficiently and accurately
 - making sure leaders check the quality of teaching more thoroughly, and use performance management better to drive up the quality of teaching
 - making sure that checks on how well the school's actions are working are accurate and based on the measurable impact on learning, in particular the checks on the support for pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium
 - making sure that improvement plans are based on the correct priorities, have clear targets for raising achievement and are implemented rigorously
 - developing the skills and knowledge of the governing body so they can check the school's work for themselves and hold leaders to account more effectively.

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 third monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 July 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work. They visited 15 lessons, 11 jointly with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. Inspectors observed pupils working with teaching assistants. They scrutinised documents, reviewed pupils' written work and mathematics work and listened to them read. They discussed with school leaders aspects of their work and also met with eight members of the governing body. They joined pupils at lunchtime and talked informally with them about their work and wellbeing. Inspectors did not evaluate pupils' reading skills as this had been a focus at the last visit.

Context

The headteacher is retiring at the end of this term. The deputy headteacher has been appointed headteacher from September 2014. A member of staff from the school has been appointed as an interim deputy headteacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

You and your staff have continued to work effectively to accelerate the progress of all pupils. Pupils' reading, writing and mathematics work are assessed regularly and accurately. The gaps in pupils' skills are pinpointed and work is effectively tailored to meet individual needs and help them meet age-related expectations. Teachers are drawing on their experiences of visiting other schools effectively. Alongside guidance provided by local authority consultants, you are ensuring that only tried and tested strategies are being used to improve achievement. The regular review of the effectiveness of these strategies, and the adjustments that are subsequently made, reflects the urgency you and the staff have given to accelerating pupils' progress.

The school's progress tracking data are highly encouraging. The proportions meeting and exceeding expectations of progress compare favourably with the current national picture. The overall rate of progress is good. The school's information about the progress that pupils are making indicates that there are only a very few pupils who have not made at least expected progress this year. Importantly, those who need to close the gap on their peers are doing so. However, there is some unevenness in the progress rates of more average ability and high ability pupils between subjects and year groups. Subject leaders understand the reasons, and have robust plans to tackle this.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have made good progress in their learning. The emphasis on role play, in and outside the classroom, has helped those whose communication skills and personal development were below expectations

make gains quickly in all areas of learning. The staff use daily checks on children's learning and development, to adjust activities effectively. Good use is made of expertise available to the school to support children with delays in their physical development as well as those with additional speech and language requirements.

Pupils in receipt of free school meals and service children benefit from a broad range of additional strategies to maximise their achievement. You have ensured that the focus is on accelerating their academic progress and personal development, no matter what their starting point.

The success of new initiatives in teaching writing, reading and phonics have made the staff eager to raise standards. The individual pupil and class writing tool kits have added an additional strategy that is benefitting all pupils. The consistency in the use of these initiatives is a factor in their success.

Teaching assistants continue to be instrumental in raising achievement. There is much better oversight of their work, and this is ensuring they have greater impact on the progress that pupils make. While disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making progress in line with other pupils, as a result of effective small group instruction, they are not benefitting fully from class lessons. Not all teachers are effectively responding to their academic needs in the main lesson. Whole-school approaches are being put in place but are taking time to have impact.

There are still groups of middle ability and upper ability pupils whose learning is not as rapid as that of those who are receiving additional support. In mathematics, this is a result of pupils' uncertainties in linking ideas and concepts and applying their understanding. Pupils are not equipped with the language needed to talk about mathematics in depth.

The quality of teaching

The transformation of teaching continues. There is an infectious appetite amongst staff to get their teaching right. Rather than waiting to be told how they should improve their teaching, they are discussing and reflecting between themselves and then applying new ideas in their classrooms.

The quality of teaching continues to improve. For example, an analysis of pupils' books shows that the match of work is much improved for the most able pupils. They are clear about what is expected of them and conscientiously adhere to the targets they have been given. They are quick to recognise when work does not challenge them, and take responsibility for finding ways to challenge themselves.

Teachers give good quality time to support pupils in preparing for longer pieces of writing and ensure that there are plenty of examples of what successful writing looks

like. Topics and subjects for written work are interesting and link well to their studies such as the work on coastal erosion used to inspire Year 5 pupils in their report writing.

During lessons, there are regular reminders of what pupils need to improve on. This is also the case in much of the marked written work. There is not yet a consistent picture of this in mathematics books. Although teachers are responding to pupils' mistakes, it is not clear whether the pupils have fully understood where they went wrong; for example, more examples to work through need to be provided so that pupils demonstrate that they have understood and are confident to move on.

Discussions between teachers and pupils form a key part of all lessons, but here too there is still variation in the quality of these in mathematics. In the better examples, teachers' questions encourage deeper thinking or help the pupils make connections between mathematical concepts by asking pupils to explain their solutions. In these cases, this helps teachers assess pupils' learning. The scrutiny of mathematics books reveals a narrow approach to teaching calculation strategies, with insufficient examples of pupils broadening their understanding.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils and parents are rightly confident that behaviour is good. Pupils are kept safe. During discussions with inspectors, pupils demonstrated a keen understanding of what constitutes being safe. They know the safeguarding systems that operate in school and value the opportunity provided if they need to talk to adults about their worries or anxieties. These systems are backed up by appropriate levels of staff training.

Pupils contribute well to learning in lessons. When asked to work unaided by adults, they do so sensibly and without exception. Attendance is above average.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

You have overseen this period of transition well. There has been no break in the pace of improvement following the appointment of a deputy headteacher. This is recognised by staff, pupils and parents. You have forged a beneficial partnership with the local authority and, as a consequence, the school continues to move strongly in the right direction.

Senior leaders are astute in their observations of learning. The quality of learning in class is challenged to improve through well-informed feedback and highly effective professional development. Areas of good practice observed in the school and other schools are followed through by teachers and are making a positive difference to pupils' achievement.

Teachers have taken on the responsibility for developing their own teaching and their leadership roles. The English and mathematics subject leaders are using the experience of the last eight months to shape action plans based on their review of subject achievement and teaching.

A dedicated group of governors have made a strong commitment to improving their own work, and this sends a powerful message to all staff. They have taken part in a penetrating self-review and acted on its findings. They have given full cooperation to the local authority project board in implementing the raising achievement plan. They visit school regularly to check on developments and see at first hand the impact of action taken to improve learning. Governors are gaining an oversight of performance management arrangements. They have a good understanding of the value gained from investments in staff training and how this is to be measured against improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

External support

The local authority has provided highly effective support. Getting the right staff into the school to drive improvement has been a key factor in establishing a supportive and challenging partnership. As a result, the local authority is now in a position to withdraw the project board and hand responsibility back to the governing body in the agreed time frame.

Assistance has been well focussed on responding to insightful evaluations of the raising achievement plan. The process has been rigorous and serves as a good model for governors to follow when they assume full responsibility for the school's development plan. Particularly beneficial for school leaders has been the selection of schools for staff to visit and observe best practice. The visit programme, combined with an expectation that teachers will use the experience to strengthen their own teaching, has contributed to the appetite for reflecting on practice within the school.

The local authority consultants have offered good support to you, your deputy headteacher, and middle leaders to drive improvement. Not only has this improved the accuracy of school evaluation but it ensures that complacency can be challenged. This is particularly the case in managing a shift in understanding of how the school is to better meet the academic needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.