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11 July 2014

Mrs C Wapshare
The Headteacher
Beechview School
Guinions Road
High Wycombe
HP13 7NT

Dear Mrs Wapshare

Special measures monitoring inspection of Beechview School

Following my visit with John Worgan, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2012. 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 newly qualified teachers before the next 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

Daniel Towl
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2012

- Accelerate pupils' achievement by improving the quality of teaching in all classes by:
 - raising teachers' and other adults' expectations of what pupils can achieve through planning work that is sufficiently challenging and well matched to the needs of all groups of pupils
 - ensuring teachers make more regular and accurate assessments of pupils' learning and use the information to plan lessons which help all pupils reach higher levels of attainment and make faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - introducing consistent ways for teachers to assess pupils' progress during lessons and to use this information to modify activities and tasks accordingly
 - ensuring that teachers do not talk for too long in lessons so that pupils can work more quickly at tasks by themselves and complete more work in their books.
- Improve the behaviour and safety of pupils by:
 - ensuring that the work interests the pupils, and that they are actively involved and concentrate well
 - improving the way pupils' behaviour is managed so that disruptions are not tolerated and pupils know they should use adult support to resolve any bullying issues
 - improving provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - ensuring that the playground is more orderly and offers a secure place to play.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring leaders urgently increase the pace of improvements with robust plans and clear, measurable targets which are checked frequently for their impact on pupils' achievements
 - making sure leaders with specific responsibilities identify the correct areas to improve, plan actions and check on their impact in order to improve pupils' learning in their subjects
 - implementing a thorough programme for checking the quality of teaching and learning, including scrutinising planning, observing lessons, talking to pupils and reviewing their work ensuring that teachers' assessments and the school's data give a regular and accurate view of how well pupils are doing
 - improving systems for managing the performance of staff so teachers meet the expected professional standards and are held to account for how well pupils achieve - taking steps to eliminate all inadequate teaching and providing any necessary training ensuring pupils' challenging targets are met because teachers know what pupils need to do to
 - improve the approach to teaching reading so pupils are more enthused to

read and have better skills which they can use in all other areas of their learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of governance through ensuring the governors:
 - gain a better understanding of the performance of pupils and require leaders to halt the declining pattern of pupils' underachievement
 - provide a relentless challenge to school leaders in holding them to account for improving the quality of teaching and learning, and the behaviour of pupils in lessons
 - check the impact of their decisions about the spending of the pupil premium funding more carefully.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 July 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, a group of pupils, the Vice Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection there have been some teaching staff changes in Years 3 and 4.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school is now making good inroads into pupils' past poor performance. Pupils' achievement continues to improve. More pupils are achieving the standards expected, although there is still too much variability across the school in the progress pupils are making. Many are still not making enough accelerated progress. Current school data indicate that a higher proportion of pupils in Year 6 will reach expected levels than in recent years. Teachers' expectations are higher. Some Year 6 pupils have been successfully working towards the higher Level 6 in mathematics, and early unvalidated information, from this year's recent national tests, shows that they are likely to gain this level.

The school's involvement with a local authority project to raise the achievement of those pupils supported by the government's pupil premium funding, a large proportion of pupils, was successful. While the overall gap between these pupils and others in the school is closing more quickly, there are still some significant differences in performance in the different age groups. Other significant groups, for example those who speak English as an additional language, are doing well.

There are clear signs that pupils are successfully developing their writing abilities, enabling them to write in a range of different styles. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 show they can write very creatively with engaging prose, using well-selected vocabulary to create interest. Writing styles are carefully taught. While the content of writing is often good, many pupils across the school are not accurate enough in their spelling and presentation across subjects and this detracts from their work.

There is not yet a systematic approach to identifying and 'plugging' gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge (matching letters to the sounds they make). Therefore, some pupils are not always confident in tackling new or 'tricky' words in reading or spelling, especially in Years 3 and 4.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is much improved, especially in Years 5 and 6 where there has been greater stability of staffing. These teachers have been able to successfully carry through the planned improvements into their everyday teaching, with the effect that more pupils are making better progress and reaching nationally expected standards. Several changes to staffing in Years 3 and 4 have had a detrimental impact on pupils' longer-term progress. The recent use of the newly-appointed acting deputy headteacher in this area has had a beneficial impact in identifying, and beginning to address, pupils' gaps in knowledge and understanding.

Where the teaching is most successful, teachers successfully use a range of techniques to engage pupils in their work, model good practice and ensure that work is relevant to pupils' interests. This is helping to raise expectations and achievements. Teachers are planning together more effectively to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. There are some examples of high quality support work by teaching assistants to help pupils catch up if they are behind or struggling with a particular aspect of their work.

While teachers regularly mark work, it is not clear from pupils' books that this is always being followed up diligently enough to make sure that misunderstandings and mistakes are rectified effectively and quickly. A scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows that teachers are not consistently ensuring that work in all subjects is completed to a level that matches their ability. For example, pupils are not always writing to the same standard in science as they are in English, and younger pupils do not always complete enough work during some lessons.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A small, randomly chosen, group of pupils told the lead inspector that behaviour had improved in the last two years and this confirms what other pupils have said on previous monitoring inspections. There has been a relentless effort by the headteacher and staff to improve behaviour. Expectations are very high and pupils mostly respond well. Although pupils said that there were some instances of bullying, these were rare and dealt with effectively by teachers. Pupils felt safe in school.

Most pupils will willingly contribute to lessons when asked and they respect each other's views.

The headteacher compiles a weekly analysis of behavioural incidents and parents are contacted at an early stage if there are concerns. The headteacher applies sanctions rigorously and, when necessary, has excluded a very small number of pupils. However, this sanction is not overused. The records show that incidents of poor behaviour are decreasing and repeat offences are fewer. This means that the calm

classrooms and school grounds, established at the time of the last monitoring inspection, have been maintained.

Because attention to checking pupils' attendance is very rigorous, the improvement gained in the last 12 months has been maintained. The headteacher has an excellent grasp of pupils' behaviour and attendance at an individual level because she, with a specially assigned teaching assistant, undertakes very detailed analyses.

There is a wider range of activities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is especially the case with their social and moral development which is successfully helping to maintain a calmer and purposeful atmosphere in the school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

After a troubled period of staffing and leadership uncertainty, when the school first became subject to special measures, a senior staff team is now properly established. The school is on a better footing to move forward more quickly. Much has been achieved in the last two terms. The headteacher is leading the school effectively and is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher and all staff. She is successfully driving forward with improvements, but there is still a way to go to rectify all the negative effects of pupils' previous low achievements.

Middle leaders, responsible for English and mathematics, have improved their skills and are developing and implementing initiatives to raise pupils' achievement. They know the strengths and weakness of their subjects and have received helpful external support to successfully improve their management capabilities. The full impact of their work has yet to be seen in tackling, for example, matters to do with pupils' spelling and phonic knowledge in English and increasing teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics.

The acting deputy headteacher has maintained a 'strong grip' on the management of support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, despite taking on significant additional teaching responsibilities.

The headteacher has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. The headteacher and external consultants regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. However, the work in pupils' books is not being monitored rigorously enough as part of an overall strategy of checking how well pupils are achieving.

The school has managed to secure a full complement of staff for the next school year, which should help to establish much need continuity in teaching across the school.

The interim executive board has started to undertake its statutory duties, is developing its strategic view and management of the school and increasing its skills through training.

It has not yet developed or detailed adequately how it will:

- systematically support and challenge the work of the school and report its findings in more detail
- increase the opportunities for individual board members to systematically gather their own first-hand evidence of the school's work and record and feedback activities to the full board
- increase its membership and the skill base of board members to undertake their duties effectively
- review its own effectiveness.

External support

Over the last two terms The Buckinghamshire Educational Trust has provided very effective support for the school. This has had a beneficial impact on raising teachers' subject knowledge and classroom skills, improving middle leaders' effectiveness and, most notably, helping the school to improve its ability to support those pupils who receive additional pupil premium funding. The school has welcomed the support it receives.