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Mr Adrian Bagnall
Headteacher
Kirk Sandall Junior School
Magnolia Close
Kirk Sandall
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN3 1JG

Dear Mr Bagnall

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kirk Sandall Junior School

Following my visit to your school with Rajinder Harrison, Additional Inspector, on 15 and 16 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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's action plan has been amended and is now fit for purpose.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and so that all pupils make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - teachers making good use of assessments to ensure they provide work that challenges pupils of varying abilities, particularly the most able and those of middle ability
 - teachers planning lesson activities which engage and maintain pupils' interest so that their behaviour and attitudes to learning are always at least good
 - insisting on high standards of pupils' written work and handwriting
 - improving pupils' use of grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - ensuring lessons move forward at a good pace and giving pupils good opportunities to use their reading, writing and mathematical skills in as many ways as possible
 - making sure all teachers adhere to the marking policy and are consistent in giving pupils clear advice on improving their work
 - making sure that at the end of lessons teachers comprehensively check with pupils what they have learnt and they make clear their next steps in learning.

- Urgently improve leadership and management, including governance, so that improvement is driven forward rapidly by:
 - ensuring all staff have high expectations about the quality of their own teaching and what each pupil is capable of achieving
 - improving the rigour with which leaders at all levels check on the quality of teaching so that weaknesses are identified quickly and plans put in place to remedy these
 - providing a high level of professional development for teachers so they know and understand what constitutes good teaching and learning
 - sharpening the focus in managing teachers' performance so that they are held to greater account for pupils' progress and improving their teaching
 - developing the roles of middle leaders so that they make an effective contribution to driving improvement in their subjects
 - undertaking a review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15 to 16 July 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books, scrutinised documents including the school's action plan and evaluations of this plan. Inspectors met with the headteacher and executive headteacher, groups of pupils, staff and members of the Interim Executive Board, and a representative from the local authority. The views of parents were sought informally at the end of the day. One inspector spoke informally with midday supervisors.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, one teacher has left the school and another is due to leave at the end of term. The school's inclusion manager is also leaving this term and one teacher is currently on long-term sickness absence. An additional deputy headteacher has taken up her post. A further five teachers are due to start in September, of these, one will take on responsibility for leading literacy and another will be the school's new inclusion manager. The school is exploring the possibility of becoming an academy.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The recent results for Year 6 show there has been some modest improvements in the progress pupils make in writing, mathematics, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Results were broadly in line with leaders' predictions with the exception of reading, which was disappointing and some way below what leaders had expected. Nevertheless, this demonstrates that the accuracy of teachers' checks on pupils' progress has improved. This increasingly reliable data has, however, revealed that achievement of pupils in Year 5 is of particular concern. Some pupils are more than a year behind in some subjects. Much of this is due to inadequate teaching over time and has been compounded by staff absence. Consequently, pupils are baffled by different routines and their progress has slowed.

Leaders are acutely aware that while there are improvements in pupils' attainment and progress, there is still a long way to go. As a result of some poor teaching over the last few years, there are still worrying gaps in pupils' learning which are not being picked up by teachers quickly enough. For example, while pupils can read accurately, their progress is hampered because they do not always understand what they are reading. Similarly, they do not have the skills to predict what might happen next or understand how a writer has created an atmosphere or tension. This has a knock on effect in preventing them from experimenting with these same skills in their own writing.

Pupils' achievement in mathematics is improving because teachers are starting to move learning on more speedily and there are fewer examples of pupils practising things they can already do. However, there are still times when tasks for higher-attaining pupils are not demanding enough.

The gaps between the achievement of pupils who are eligible for additional support through the pupil premium and their peers continue to close. This is because the effective interventions described in the previous report have been maintained and there are sound plans to further improve the focus of these extra sessions. The same is true for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The quality of teaching

Teachers have welcomed the support and training from the Brighter Futures Trust. They are putting into practise what they have learned with varying degrees of success. Classrooms are bright and tidy and displays are carefully designed to support learning, so pupils refer to them regularly and this helps them to improve their work. The clutter and untidiness described in the last monitoring inspection has vastly improved. Pupils' handwriting and presentation is starting to take shape. They make an effort to use pencils and rulers carefully and ask each other if their handwriting is neat enough.

Teachers' marking has improved. A new marking policy has been agreed and pupils approve of the, 'green ink to make you think' approach from teachers. This gives pupils extra challenges or picks up on their mistakes. Some teachers are conscientiously making time for pupils to respond to these helpful comments but in some cases this has been inconsistent or superficial.

All the teachers are working hard to improve their practice and they have made a concerted effort to check pupils' understanding at the end of the lesson. However, the on-going checks throughout lessons remain under-developed. Consequently, teachers do not always spot when there is a gap in pupils' learning. There are examples of teachers doing this very well and using probing questions which test pupils' understanding to make them think hard. For example, in Year 5, pupils had to think deeply about words that sound the same but have different meanings. The teacher's questions quickly revealed that some pupils did not have a precise understanding of some of the words and she re-shaped the work so that this was secure. The result was that pupils were able to use these words confidently to create humour and irony in their writing. This excellent practice is not widespread and too often pupils' mistakes are glossed over and so pupils' learning is insecure.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to behave well around the school. They are kind to each other and play together sensibly. They have faith in teachers and other adults to take action if there is any hint of bullying. Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving especially when work is interesting and challenging. However, they still lack self-discipline if they are bored and use excuses to get out of their seat and chat with friends. Attendance remains above the national average and pupils enjoy being at school. This is clear from pupils' enjoyment of sporting and musical events, for example, Year 6 pupils thoroughly enjoyed singing, acting and dancing for their parents during the inspection.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Teachers have benefited from high-quality training and support. This has brought about improvements in marking and is beginning to improve teachers' checks on pupils' progress. The executive headteacher and members of the Interim Executive Board have quite rightly focused their efforts on ensuring high-quality staff are recruited ready for September and they are confident they have made some promising appointments.

Leaders, with the support of the executive headteacher, have amended the school action plan. This is much clearer and contained within one document. It outlines what success will look like at various points in time and this makes it easier for members of the Interim Executive Board and leaders to check on how well the school is doing.

Leaders have relied heavily on support from the Brighter Futures Trust to set up robust systems to check on the quality of the work of teachers and pupils. This has set the stage for the headteacher and his senior leadership team to take full responsibility for these checks and to use the information they gather to secure swift improvement. Middle leaders are in the early stages of developing their skills and they have not been involved in checking the quality of teaching. However, they are keen to begin this important work.

Members of the Interim Executive Board have introduced a new appraisal system for teachers. This new system clearly links rewards for teachers to the progress made by the pupils for whom they are responsible. The members of the Interim Executive Board take their duties very seriously and they are meticulous in checking the school's progress. They have a wide range of appropriate skills and they are fully committed to supporting the school on its journey out of special measures. The sharp challenge they offer ensures leaders are equally focused on bringing about improvements.

External support

The support from the Brighter Futures Trust and the local authority has been vital in securing improvements. A large number of teachers from schools in the Trust have been involved and the executive headteacher has methodically ensured coherence, checking that everyone understands what is required and systematically evaluating the impact of their work. Consequently, leaders have gained confidence and are ready to work more independently.