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12 September 2014

Mrs Michelle Hooper
West Heath Primary School
Rednal Road
Birmingham
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Dear Mrs Hooper

Special measures monitoring inspection of West Heath Primary School

Following my visit with Christine Millward, Additional Inspector, to your school on 10–11 September 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 November 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 teacher should be appointed to a year group containing a teacher that delivers good or outstanding lessons and whose pupils make expected or better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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 Birmingham.

Yours sincerely
Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve teaching so that none is inadequate and much more is good or better by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations and are precise about what they want each group of pupils to learn and how they are going to check how successful they have been
 - make accurate use of information about what pupils already know and can do to plan work which challenges all groups of pupils and helps learning to move at a brisk pace
 - develop secure subject knowledge for the teaching of mathematics
 - use time more effectively in lessons so that pupils spend more time actively engaged in, and making decisions about, their own learning
 - plan lessons that excite pupils and engage their curiosity
 - use teaching assistants and other adults more effectively, so none of their time is wasted, and check that their support is helping pupils to make better progress
 - use marking to inform pupils about how well they are doing against their targets and what they need to do to improve their work.

- Raise standards in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring that the teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds) is more closely matched to pupils' abilities and moves learning on more quickly
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop the skills of writing at length in different subjects.

- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - improving leaders' understanding of how much progress pupils should make in order that suitably challenging targets can be set
 - improving the accuracy of school self-evaluation by rigorously analysing all available information
 - implementing more rigorous checks on teaching that focus on how successful teachers are at moving learning on and how they can improve their practice
 - working closely with parents and carers so that they are better able to support their children's learning
 - improve governance by ensuring that members of the governing body are better informed about the school's performance and can use information to set more challenging targets for improvement
 - arranging an external review of governance to include a specific focus on the school's use of pupil premium funding.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10-11 September 2014

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team, the Chair and members of the Governing Body and spoke to two representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Inspectors also met with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and the subject leaders for the Early Years, literacy and numeracy. Inspectors observed parts of lessons across all year groups including the Early Years, eight of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. During these observations inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and spoke to them about their learning. The inspection team observed the behaviour of pupils as they arrived at the school, at break and lunchtimes, as they left the school premises at the end of the day and in lessons. I spoke with a number of parents as they brought their children to school. In addition, I reviewed the data that the school has on pupils' progress and the governors' minutes of meetings. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including the school's policies on safeguarding and child protection, information about pupils' attendance and the vetting checks on staff new to the school.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection seven teachers and one teaching assistant have left the school. Six teachers have joined the school, teaching classes in the Early Years and Years 1 and 5. A newly qualified teacher has been appointed to teach in Year 3. The numeracy leader relinquished the role in the summer term. Two members of the existing teaching staff new to leadership have taken responsibility for numeracy. This inspection took place in the first week of the new school term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the inspection in November 2013, pupils are making better progress in most year groups because they are experiencing more effective teaching over time particularly in English and literacy including phonics. However, pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is still below that expected. Girls' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is better than that of boys across all year groups, with the exception of those now in Year 6.

Since November 2013, a greater number of children in the Early Years demonstrate a good level of development and the expected levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in communication and language, physical development, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design. However, there are gaps between the knowledge, skills and understanding of disadvantaged children, those in receipt of the pupil premium grant, and other children in physical development, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts

and design. Children joining the school in the Early Years in September 2014 have quickly adapted to the school's routines and expectations.

In Years 1 and 2, a greater number of pupils are at age-related expectations in reading and mathematics. However, progress in writing is less secure. Disadvantaged pupils and those who are disabled and those with special educational needs do not do as well as other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. School leaders are aware of this and are providing training for staff and interventions for pupils.

Pupils' progress in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 has improved compared to pupils' progress in 2013, particularly in reading where pupils' progress is now in line with national figures. However, pupils' progress in mathematics fell slightly compared to 2013 and is below national figures. Disadvantaged pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 in the summer of 2014 achieved the same as other pupils in reading. However, they were around a term behind other pupils in writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress in writing is below that expected in Years 3 and 5.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the inspection in November 2013. As a consequence, a larger number of pupils are making better progress, particularly in reading.

Where teaching is particularly effective, teachers' good subject knowledge and their accurate assessment of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are used to plan learning opportunities that engage the interest and attention of pupils and are matched to their needs and abilities. However, this effective approach to promoting pupils' learning is not consistently evident across the school.

Where pupils' learning is limited, teachers have not considered carefully enough what pupils need to be able to do and know. As a consequence, learning activities are not always challenging or matched appropriately to the needs of individual pupils. Assessment of pupils' learning during lessons is inconsistent. Where teaching is effective, teachers assess the pupils' understanding and adapt their lessons to ensure individual pupils' progress is maintained. However, some teachers miss opportunities to assess pupils' understanding and to provide feedback to help pupils better understand the work and to apply their knowledge and skills. This is particularly noticeable in the teaching of mathematics. As a consequence, pupils' misunderstanding and misconceptions are not challenged or corrected.

Pupils' writing skills are improving as a result of a focus on the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils are given opportunities to practise these skills in all subjects, for example in topic work and science.

Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They do this by promoting positive attitudes and approaches to learning. For example, teaching assistants were observed encouraging pupils to be resilient in the face of difficulties by getting them to consider alternative approaches to problem solving. As a consequence, pupils were able to complete work independently without overly relying on the teacher or teaching assistant.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons. They demonstrate good social skills, for example, by waiting their turn, cooperating with and supporting their classmates and settling quickly to work set by the teacher or teaching assistant. Teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour policy. Pupils stated that behaviour in school has improved dramatically and that this enables them to learn.

The school's 'values education' programme, where values such as respect, pride, politeness, resilience are promoted, encouraged and explicitly taught, is having a positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour. One pupil spoke for many when she said that the programme had enabled her 'to speak freely and with confidence'. Pupils treat the school's buildings and resources with respect. There is no graffiti and the toilets are clean and hygienic. Pupils wear the school uniform with pride. Pupils told inspectors that they greatly appreciate the opportunity to talk with school leaders about the school's facilities and that their suggestions are acted upon.

When asked, pupils state that they feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including resisting the attempts of others to persuade them to act in a way that is anti-social or unlawful. Pupils are clear about the different types of bullying and know who to go to if they witness bullying. Though incidents of bullying are rare, pupils say that adults in school act quickly to support the victim and the perpetrator.

The improvement in pupils' attendance has been sustained since the inspection in November 2013, rising from 91 percent to 97 percent, and the number of pupils, who are persistently absent, missing 15 percent of lessons, continues to fall. The number of fixed term exclusions has decreased.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the inspection in November 2013 the school has undergone considerable change. This has been well-managed by the headteacher and other members of the leadership group. The buildings and facilities have been greatly enhanced and promote a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils' behaviour and attendance have improved and pupils' consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to

learning. However, many of the new initiatives have not been in place long enough to show a sustained impact on pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics, throughout the school.

The school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement is accurate and has been used to plan appropriate actions to improve pupils' learning, behaviour and to better prepare them for the next stage of their education. The headteacher has tackled teachers' underperformance and staff told inspectors that they are clear about what is needed to improve pupils' achievement.

Leaders who have been in post since the monitoring inspection visit in May 2014 have implemented procedures for monitoring the performance of staff and the subsequent impact of their teaching on pupils' outcomes. However, staff new to their leadership roles do not have a secure view on how they will monitor, evaluate and review the area for which they have responsibility, including the impact of the revised curriculum, or how they will assess pupils' progress from their starting points.

Communication with parents is wide-ranging through, for example, Twitter, Facebook, a weekly newsletter, a parent forum group, termly updates on pupils' progress and workshops for parents to help them support their children's learning. The majority of parents told inspectors that they are satisfied with these methods as they keep them up-to-date with school events and changes such as the introduction of the new curriculum and assessment procedures. Parents also said that members of staff were readily available to discuss their concerns or worries.

The governing body has finalised the structure of its sub-committees and has put in place procedures to monitor, evaluate and review the work of the school. However, during the period when these arrangements were being finalised, governors have not thoroughly and rigorously held school leaders to account for pupils' outcomes or challenged the underperformance of groups of pupils, such as those who are disadvantaged. Members of the governing body are aware of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. However, they are overly reliant on the information provided by the headteacher to inform their views of the school.

External support

The local authority continues to monitor the work of the school through the Monitoring Task Force. They have also commissioned reviews of the school's provision such as that for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs. However, the local authority has not been proactive in supporting or advising the governing body during its reconstitution and restructuring of sub-committees.

The school has made links with two primary schools, The Meadows Primary School and Colmers Farm Junior School and a secondary school, Queensbridge School.

Queensbridge School are providing a mathematics specialist to support the school's drive to improve the teaching of this subject.