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25 September 2014

Mrs Morven Stroud
Headteacher
Gorsefield Primary School
Robertson Street
Radcliffe
Manchester
M26 4DW

Dear Mrs Stroud

Special measures monitoring inspection of Gorsefield Primary School

Following my visit with Adrian Francis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 23 and 24 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.

This was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 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 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 Governing Body and the Executive Director of Children, Young People and Culture for Bury.

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 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 any remaining inadequate teaching raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve
 - making sure that all teachers use information about pupils' progress to plan lessons which meet pupils' varying needs and abilities and provide good levels of challenge, particularly for the middle-ability and the most able pupils
 - ensuring marking consistently provides clear guidance for pupils about what they need to do next to improve their work and giving pupils time to act on it
 - making sure that teaching motivates and engages pupils enough in their work so that their attitudes to learning are always good
 - ensuring that support staff play an active role in all parts of lessons.

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, so that they are at least in line with national standards by the end of Year 6, by:
 - improving pupils' accuracy in their use of grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - improving the teaching of phonics (the links between sounds and letters)
 - making sure that all pupils read high-quality and varied texts that are appropriate for their differing ages and abilities
 - ensuring that all teachers insist on high expectations of good standards and presentation of pupils' work, including neat, correctly formed handwriting and numbers that are always modelled accurately by staff
 - placing less emphasis on the completion of worksheets and giving more opportunities for pupils to set out their own work
 - providing pupils with more open-ended challenges which encourage them to further develop their mathematical thinking, especially in a real-life context, particularly the middle-ability and the most able pupils.

- Urgently improve leadership and management, including governance, so that the school's improvement is rapid and its capacity to improve strengthens by:
 - providing training for leaders at all levels so they can accurately evaluate the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility, including through reviewing teachers' planning, observing lessons and scrutinising pupils' work
 - making sure that senior and middle leaders check more carefully that all teachers are providing work that is well matched to pupils' varying abilities
 - ensuring improvement plans are clear, identify specific outcomes in terms of pupils' achievement and include interim measures against which progress can be regularly evaluated
 - improving the systems to manage the performance of staff so that they are held fully to account for the progress of pupils

- improving the skills and knowledge of the governing body so it is able to effectively hold leaders fully to account for rapidly improving teaching and pupils' progress
- undertaking an external review of governance, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 23 to 24 September 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the Chair and four members of the governing body, teachers and a representative of the local authority. They also spoke to pupils in class and around the school and held a meeting with 10 pupils, chosen at random, from Years 1 to 6.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, one teacher has retired and one new teacher has been appointed. The school has also reorganised the way that it deploys its teaching assistants. Discussions on the conversion of the school to academy status continue.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Unvalidated results for 2014 show a considerable increase in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of early years. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in phonics (the sounds that letters make) at the end of Year 1 has also increased. Key Stage 1 results have improved, although they are still lower than the national averages for 2013. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has improved in writing but declined in spelling, grammar and punctuation, reading and mathematics. The senior leadership team has conducted a detailed analysis of these results to identify the factors contributing to underperformance and have drawn up strategies to tackle them. These include building up pupils' resilience, so that they work more quickly and efficiently and complete all the tasks in a test.

Demanding targets have been set for next year but those for 2016 will need to be revisited, to ensure that expectations continue to rise. The school has identified the pupils in each age group who will need additional help to make the increased progress necessary to meet their targets. The impact of this additional help is already being seen in the impressive progress being made by pupils with special educational needs. However, as senior leaders recognise, the focus on increasing the rates of progress for all groups of pupils will have to be relentless if their aims are to be achieved.

The Year 4 pupils who were heard reading did so with a fair degree of fluency and expression. They had strategies for deciphering unfamiliar words and were beginning to develop the skills of using a dictionary to find the meanings of words that were new to them. In lessons, pupils showed a developing understanding of the rules of spelling and grammar but, in some classes, the amount of writing produced

since the beginning of term was limited. In the Year 6 guided reading sessions observed, pupils were making good progress in developing their thinking and communication skills.

The work seen in lessons and in books indicated that there is still more to be done to enable pupils to apply their mathematical skills in a variety of contexts.

The quality of teaching

The school's data indicate that the quality of teaching is improving. More instances of effective teaching were seen during this inspection than during the previous monitoring inspection. Planning and delivery of lessons reflected the impact of the whole-school focus on improving the quality of questioning, guided reading and spelling. However, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

The lessons seen were generally well prepared, with clear goals and tasks that were planned to meet the needs of pupils of differing abilities. In Key Stage 1, the purpose of tasks that children could select for themselves was not always clear and insufficient explanation meant that not all pupils understood what was expected of them.

In several instances, the teachers provided good models of how to approach a task and gave focused support to specific pupils. However, some teachers found it difficult to keep an overview of the whole class while working with a particular group. As a result they were slow to identify the children who were ready to move on in their learning. When walking around the classroom, teachers did not always check on children's work to see how well they were doing and to provide additional support and correct errors and misunderstandings.

Inspectors saw several examples of teaching assistants working very closely with the teacher and using their skills and understanding to give well-timed and focused support to specific pupils or groups of pupils. They related well to the children, knew what additional help they needed and often made very effective use of questioning to support the pupils' progress. However, not every teacher was confident in devolving responsibility to the assistants and making the best use of their skills.

The quality of presentation of work is improving but remains variable. There were too many instances in mathematics where a lack of attention to the way that the work was set out led to inaccuracies of calculation.

The marking policy is being implemented with varying degrees of rigour. Additional tasks are not always completed by the pupils or followed up by the teachers. Not all children are yet making effective use of 'purple pen' time to review and improve their own and others' work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

There are continuing improvements in the behaviour and safety of pupils.

Pupils arrive at lessons on time and ready to work. In class, the great majority of them concentrate well and even the youngest pupils move quietly and purposefully from one activity to another, with little prompting from their teachers. The pupils relate well to each other and to adults, including visitors to the school. They behave responsibly during break and lunchtimes and when moving around the school. There are clear strategies for tackling misbehaviour in a consistent and timely way.

The pupils who spoke to inspectors said they felt safe within the school and in the neighbourhood. They said that bullying was very rare. If it did happen, they were confident that it would be dealt with very quickly by staff.

The systems for checking on the suitability of staff employed at the school are thorough.

Attendance continues to be better than the average nationally.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The senior leadership team includes a number of skilled staff who have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards at the school. The coaching and training programme has been well received by teachers and makes effective use of the expertise within as well as outside the school. The monitoring of the quality of teaching is well planned and rigorous. Support for teachers is carefully matched to individual needs and relates clearly to the revised programme of appraisal and performance management. Teachers report that the climate in the school is positive, with colleagues being ready to share ideas and provide valuable, mutual support.

The two special educational needs coordinators provide strong leadership. The impact of the systems established for monitoring and supporting pupils with special educational needs is reflected in the rapid progress that many of them have made.

The decision to renegotiate the roles of the teaching assistants and to introduce a new appraisal process for them is leading to the increasingly effective use of an important means of improving teaching and learning.

The headteacher and her deputy conduct regular reviews of the action plan. However, the documentation has become unwieldy and the lack of cross-referencing between the action plan and other plans makes it difficult to maintain a clear view of

what has been achieved and what remains to be done. This is compounded by the lack of clarity about the actions to be taken beyond January 2015.

Regular discussions about progress have been held between senior leaders and the raising achievement committee of the governing body. However, the lack of a written evaluation limits the extent to which every governor has access to detailed information about the progress that the school is making and where further improvements are required. Staff report that governors are now more actively involved in the work of the school and they appreciate the support provided.

Preparations for the transition to academy status continue. The target date for this has now been revised from January to April 2015. As part of the process, the school has recently undergone a 'due diligence' exercise, led by the Executive Principal of the proposed sponsoring school.

External support

Through the School Effectiveness Partner, the local authority continues to provide relevant support and guidance to the Raising Achievement Committee and advice on improvement planning and target-setting. The most effective support has been the provision of additional funding to release time for the Key Stage 2 phase leader to support monitoring of teaching and learning and the analysis of data. The senior leaders appreciate the advice that the local authority has also provided in preparing for the conversion to academy status.

Further support has been provided by a national leader and a specialist leader of education. They have focused on teaching and learning, improving the classroom environment, lesson planning and validating the monitoring process. The impact of this work is beginning to be reflected within classrooms.

To ensure further improvement:

- As a matter of urgency, senior leaders should produce a written evaluation of attainment and progress and share this with all governors, so that each one of them knows how well pupils at each key stage are performing in relation to:
 - the school's past performance
 - results nationally
 - the school's own targets.
- Senior leaders and governors should work together to determine precisely what actions they need to take to ensure that the school meets its targets for June 2015.