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20 October 2014

Mrs Jane Sculpher
The Headteacher
Sandy Lane Primary School
Sandy Lane
Bracknell
Berkshire
RG12 2JG

Dear Mrs Sculpher

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Sandy Lane Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 October 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 was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in November 2013. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bracknell Forest.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - all learning activities are carefully matched to the needs of individual pupils, particularly in mathematics, so that they are always challenging
 - the teaching of reading, particularly phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is of consistently high quality, as well as the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - weaker teachers observe and learn from the several strong teachers in school.
- Ensure that all groups of pupils in Key Stage 2 achieve highly, especially girls, those eligible for the pupil premium and the most-able, by:
 - rigorously monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and progress for these groups
 - increasing pupils' ability to maintain concentration for sustained periods when working
 - increasing pupils ability to work out what to do when stuck
 - implementing and monitoring targeted interventions for any pupil or group of pupils who are making less progress than could be expected, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium.
- Take the next steps in improving the school's leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - embedding the recently revised roles of middle leaders, including that for special educational needs, and narrowing the gap leaders and continue to empower them to impact on the quality of teaching and pupil progress in their teams ensuring that the performance data received by the governors are accurate.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning by:
 - ensuring every lesson is interesting and engaging with activities meeting the needs of every child, regardless of their ability
 - increasing the resilience of all pupils to increase their ability to work without adult intervention.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of pupil premium funding, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 October 2014

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteachers, recently appointed members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority. Three lessons were observed, and several classrooms were visited with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector met with a group of middle leaders. The inspection considered the progress made by the school since the last monitoring visit, with particular reference to the teaching of phonics and mathematics, the progress of groups of pupils and the strategic leadership of the school.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit 10 teachers have left the school and eight have been appointed. This includes two teachers from a supply agency. Four governors have left the governing body since the summer term, and three new governors have joined. The school is now part of the local Forest Teaching Schools Alliance (FTSA), with particular support offered by the teaching school, Uplands Primary School.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Actions to bring about rapid improvement have been slow to take effect in several areas.

- The school improvement plan is a useful document. However, actions are not sharply enough prioritised by senior leaders. Leadership roles are not all clear enough, specifically about overall responsibilities, for example in data analysis and evaluation. As a result, there has been limited impact on improving the key areas identified in the last inspection.
- The roles of middle leaders have been usefully refined. New leaders of mathematics and of Years 5 and 6 are now in place. These leaders are being supported by development work through the FSTA, but it is too early to assess what impact they are having on standards in their areas.
- A new leader responsible for narrowing the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others has recently been put in place. Teachers are now aware of disadvantaged pupils in their groups, but little else has been implemented as yet.
- The ineffective leadership of the governing body is a serious concern. Monitoring of the school's progress is extremely limited and challenge is rarely offered. The governing body is not informed about the chair's communication with the local authority. Information from the school, for example the progress of disadvantaged pupils, critical to the school's improvement, has not been provided clearly enough for governors. The interaction between the school leaders and the governing body is not effective in moving the school forward.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Pupils in Reception Year are now benefiting from high quality teaching in phonics because of effective training in this area. Teaching is less secure in other year groups and outcomes for phonics remain lower than those achieved nationally. The teaching of mathematics is showing some signs of improvement, although this is yet to impact significantly on pupils' progress.
- A well-thought-out programme of mentoring and support has been developed for weaker teachers to work with stronger practitioners, both in school and more widely in the FSTA. This is starting to improve the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved significantly because of a more consistent approach by teachers. In Reception, children show exemplary keenness to learn.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The high level of staff turnover means that much of the training undertaken in the summer term will need to be repeated in order to secure better teaching. The quality of teaching and the marking of pupils' work remain variable. Analysis of the disappointing summer test results for last year's Year 6 pupils revealed leaders' failure to identify inaccurate use of the school's tracking system, as well as weaknesses in teaching. Sensibly two training sessions have already taken place in the effective use of this system and a third session is planned for this term.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 do not yet make enough progress. Achievement data are now secure, and leaders are now using these confidently to provide more support for those pupils who need to catch up with their peers. This has yet to show an impact on progress.
- Pupils in receipt of additional pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils in receipt of free school meals or looked after by the local authority) and those with special educational needs, still make much less progress than their peers. Despite this, school leaders and governors have not yet given enough priority to tracking or supporting these groups.

External support

The local authority provides extensive support for the school, but recognises that too little has been achieved. The Management Information Board meets regularly to examine the progress made and offers keen challenge. The local authority has raised and re-directed the level of support. It has brokered the school's membership of the FTSA, now providing useful support for leadership at all levels. Teachers' visits to other schools in the partnership are increasingly beneficial. The local authority has provided support with moderation of teacher assessment, which is now secure. A mathematics consultant is working with the school; mathematics teaching is improving as a result. A local authority governor has very recently joined the governing body, bringing an astute and accurate view of what needs to improve.

The school should take urgent action to:

- improve the effectiveness of the governing body in monitoring, supporting and challenging the school, and the way in which senior leaders work with the governing body
- track the progress of those pupils in receipt of the pupil premium funding and those with special educational needs to ensure that all funding is spent to secure much better outcomes for these groups.