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21 November 2014

Mrs Sandra Matthews
The Executive Headteacher
Somerford Primary Community School
Draper Road
Christchurch
BH23 3AS

Dear Mrs Matthews

Special measures monitoring inspection of Somerford Primary Community School

Following my visit to your school on 20 November 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, representatives from the governing body, senior and middle leaders, parents, teachers and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also met with a small group of Key Stage 2 pupils. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were also evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection the governing body has been reconstituted and restructured. A National Leader of Education (NLE) has also been appointed as an associate governor. Sixteen members of staff have left the school. Five new teachers, including two assistant headteachers and six support staff, joined the school in September 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The local authority's statement of action and the school improvement plan were presented to the inspector as one document. The local authority representative has worked closely with the school to identify how the local authority will allocate resources to support the school and ensure targets are achieved in the timescales set.

Following the permanent executive headteacher's arrival in April 2014, she has secured stability of staff and provided much needed reassurance for the school and wider community. Parents welcome the honest communication about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Morale amongst staff is now good because they feel supported and encouraged to contribute to school improvement. Members of the reconstituted governing body are confident the executive headteacher is exercising the necessary rigorous and aspirational leadership essential to bring about lasting improvements in the school. Staff and governors acknowledge the inspection outcome was the catalyst needed for change. As a result, staff are highly motivated to address the weaknesses identified in the inspection report.

Actions to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are well underway. A programme of training to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge has raised teachers' expectations of the quality of their own practice. The executive headteacher's regular visits to classes indicate there is no longer any inadequate teaching in school and much that is good or better. Senior and middle leaders' regular checks on pupils' learning and their work in books confirm pupils' improving rate of learning and progress is gathering momentum.

The strengthened communication channels within school have resulted in more regular and useful links with parents and the wider community. Parents are now invited to meet each month with members of the governing body. The parent representatives who met with me say they feel much more welcome in school and better informed about the work of the school, its future and the progress their children are making.

The local authority has begun to work closely alongside senior leaders to check on the work of the school. It is providing additional resources for the school to develop the monitoring work of middle leaders. Governors now meet regularly with the executive headteacher to check on the work of the school. They have established links with subject leaders who regularly provide them with information on the achievement of pupils. Training for the governing body is being provided by a National Leader of Education (NLE) in order to give governors a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. As a result, governors are already beginning to exercise greater confidence in holding senior leaders to account.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector