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20 November 2014

Mrs Michelle Johnstone
Executive Headteacher
Etruscan Primary School
Dundee Road, Etruria
Stoke on Trent
Staffordshire
ST1 4BS

Dear Mrs Johnstone

Special measures monitoring inspection of Etruscan Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 and 19 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of People Services for Stoke on Trent.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector, Senior

Annex

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

- Raise the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2, so that pupils' behaviour improves and their progress accelerates, especially in writing, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of pupils, especially the more able
 - use assessment information to provide engaging and challenging activities that build upon what pupils already know, understand and can do
 - plan lessons that focus on pupils' learning and not just on the activities they will do
 - do not use an excessive amount of time introducing lessons or explaining activities
 - give pupils clear guidance when marking their work about what they need to do to improve, and increase the opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' comments so that they can learn from their mistakes
 - stimulate pupils' imaginations so that they are motivated to write
 - give pupils more opportunities to write at length in literacy lessons and in subjects such as history and geography.

- Use the pupil premium funding to accelerate rapidly the progress of those pupils known to be eligible for this additional support.

- Work with parents to improve attendance to at least the national average.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - all leaders and managers make regular checks to ensure that the improvement strategies are improving teaching and raising achievement
 - all leaders develop their skills of checking and improving the teaching and so raise achievement in their areas of responsibility
 - the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is tracked effectively so that leaders have an accurate view of their achievement
 - all plans for improvement are sharply focused on improving pupils' achievement and have measurable outcomes that can be monitored regularly
 - governors develop their skills so that they can effectively check the work of the school and hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - an external review of governance is undertaken, 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 third monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 November 2014.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, a representative of the local authority and members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). She observed lessons, all of them jointly with the executive headteacher or head of school. She spoke to pupils in lessons, examined the work in their books and heard pupils read. She scrutinised a range of data about pupils' performance and documents relating to how leaders and managers are improving and monitoring the work of the school.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the executive headteacher's post has been made permanent. Two new teachers have joined the school. Additional support staff have been appointed to work in classes or as part of a newly created inclusion team. A new business manager has been appointed; she joins the senior leadership team. A middle leadership team has been created consisting of an assessment leader and three temporary leaders for mathematics, English, phonics (the sounds that letters make) and early reading.

The school is undergoing major building works. This includes the addition of eight new classrooms, a new reception area with offices, an extension to the existing hall and kitchen, a larger car park and playing field.

The number of places in Reception has increased from 45 to 60. The increase in places will follow through the school, year-on-year.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards remain too low. Standards are rising most rapidly in upper Key Stage 2 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Elsewhere, pupils' progress remains too slow.

In the 2014 national assessments, the proportion of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieving a good level of development was higher than in the previous year but, at 42%, was still lower than the national figure. In the Year 1 phonic check, only 41% of pupils met the expected standard compared to 74% nationally, a drop on the previous year. Boys underperformed significantly in the check but pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding) performed better than those not eligible.

In the Key Stage 1 assessments, results were the highest they have been for more than five years but were still significantly below the national. On average, pupils currently in Year 3 left Year 2 about six months behind their peers nationally, compared to the previous cohort who were a year or more behind. Again, boys achieved even less well than girls in school and all other pupils nationally.

In the Key Stage 2 national tests and assessments, standards in writing improved, from an exceptionally low base in 2013, whereas those in reading and mathematics declined. In reading, too few pupils reached a secure Level 4, the expected level, or the higher Level 5. In mathematics, the situation was worse, with too few pupils managing to secure even the basic Level 4. This picture of unevenness is evident, currently, in pupils' progress in lessons.

Standards in reading are rising but from exceptionally low starting points in some year groups. The impact of the work undertaken to embed consistent approaches to teaching reading are most evident in pupils' attitudes to reading, especially in Years 5 and 6, where pupils are making the most rapid progress.

Progress in reading is limited in Years 3 and 4, and for less able pupils across Key Stage 2, because not all guided reading sessions are used to optimum effect: pupils spend the time completing low-level writing activities on the days when they do not read with an adult instead of using this time productively to read complete books. In addition, many pupils, who still need them, do not have a decodeable reading book to take home to practise the sounds they are learning. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 form the cohorts that attained well below the national average in the 2013 and 2014 national assessments, so improvements in their reading are urgently needed.

In Key Stage 1, standards in reading are improving but are still too low. In the current Year 2, the overwhelming majority of pupils have reading ages below their chronological ages; the legacy of having had several supply teachers in Year 1 and Reception. In contrast, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are further ahead in their acquisition of letter-sound knowledge than were previous cohorts. Many children in Reception are reading simple books and, for the first time ever, children in Nursery are learning to recognise and say initial sounds.

Standards in mathematics are a major concern. They are not rising rapidly enough. Across the school, pupils have considerable gaps in their knowledge and skills and their understanding of basic concepts. For example, a boy in Year 5 did not know that £1 was equivalent to 100 pence and a girl in Year 2 did not recognise the phrases 'sets of' and 'groups of'. Elsewhere, the inspector observed pupils confused by their mathematics work, unable to make progress, because of gaps in their understanding of the concept being taught. In contrast, she observed the most able Year 5 and 6 pupils making outstanding progress in a lesson on division of fractions by fractions.

Standards in writing remain too low although progress is being made, especially in upper Key Stage 2. Pupils are benefiting from clearer writing lesson structures. All classes now use novels and texts as the central core of their English lessons and, as a result, pupils' vocabulary and writing are improving. The sustained focus on teaching and explaining new vocabulary is paying dividends. The inspector observed Year 6 pupils learning new vocabulary from a text about the legend of Robin Hood. They listened to, and read, an audio recording of the text before discussing it and analysing its main features. In general, the pupils' spoken responses were of a higher order than have previously been the case; several pupils automatically referring back to the text to justify their responses or to seek clarification. Presentation of pupils' written work is still too variable, although improving.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is much improved but it is still uneven across the school. School-wide routines and systems, such as those for teaching reading and writing, are consistently followed by all teachers but some refinements are still needed to ensure that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress.

There are weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics that continue to hold back pupils' progress. Although there has been a clear focus on teachers using correct technical vocabulary and general improvements to lesson planning, there is too little thought given to ensuring that pupils develop a deep understanding of concepts. Teachers are too focused on recording and they introduce abstract work too quickly without checking that pupils understand the concept being developed. In so doing, they miss opportunities to assess pupils' understanding. Teachers do not routinely move from concrete materials through visual support to the abstract, and back again, in their questioning of pupils' understanding. Not all adults understand how children develop concepts and how best to help them secure their understanding. Additionally, there is not enough use of practical mathematics equipment to help pupils develop concepts. Teachers and pupils do not routinely use, for example, base 10 equipment, to explain, work out and respond to questions.

Despite this, staff report that the opportunities to work with staff from the partner school, St Mark's, have been useful and productive. Regular professional development is now a key feature of the school and staff are supported and challenged in equal measure. The programme of monitoring, which has been established, ensures that staff are observed teaching regularly. Individual support plans and mentors are in place for those who need extra help.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

This aspect of the school's work is much improved and the areas for improvement that were identified at the full inspection in November 2013 have been tackled successfully. Attendance is much improved: current attendance is 95.02% compared

to 92.57% for the same period last year. Persistent absence is reducing. There have been no exclusions for two years. A review of behaviour and attendance by the local authority behaviour service was very positive. It noted that all its recommendations had been put in place by the school. School rules are widely displayed and are known by pupils. Behaviour incidents are reducing and there is a sharper analysis of these data.

There is extensive building work taking place but pupils are responding sensibly and safely during this upheaval. Staff monitor the situation well and ensure that pupils are safe.

Behaviour observed in classrooms and at lunchtimes and breaks was typically good. The inspector observed some occasional off-task behaviour that was related to the quality of teaching. The pupils are, for the most part, very keen to work, engaged in lessons and enjoy school.

Staff are very aware of possible risks to the pupils of possible radicalisation and of the danger of female genital mutilation (FGM). The school has good links with local PREVENT officers. The executive headteacher and head of school recently undertook training on FGM.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership and management are improving.

The executive headteacher's position is now permanent. She is contracted by both Etruscan School and St Mark's. The head of school's post has also been made permanent. Both have new job descriptions with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

The executive headteacher continues to provide an excellent role model for staff; she is instrumental in developing the members of the senior and middle leadership teams. Both groups are beginning to understand their roles. They each have development plans and a mentor. The executive headteacher mentors the head of school and assistant headteacher and they, in turn, mentor the middle leaders.

Senior and middle leaders all report that the school is benefiting from the close links established with St Mark's where they can observe good practice. They also value the opportunity to work with other groups of teachers and subject leaders in the locality. They are participating in a range of monitoring activities across the school, observation of lessons and scrutiny of teachers' planning and of pupils' books. However, despite all the monitoring activities and training, members of the senior and middle leadership teams are not yet seeing all the gaps in provision and how to improve teaching and standards. For example, guided reading sessions had been observed but the weaknesses in the sessions not identified.

The head of school leads on behaviour, safeguarding and attendance. This aspect of the school's work has improved significantly.

The IEB is very strong. Its members bring to their work a good range of professional skills. They support and challenge the executive headteacher and head of school in equal measure. The Chair and Vice-Chair are proactive and are able and willing to take initiative, for example, planning and undertaking their own review of the use of the pupil premium.

External support

The local authority officer visits the school weekly, either to join the IEB meeting or to meet up with the executive headteacher. She has a very accurate picture of the school and its progress. She acts as mediator for any additional support that the school may need. The impact of the local authority support is good.