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12 December 2014

Mr David Lloyd
Executive headteacher
Westgate Primary School
Summerhill Road
Dartford
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Dear Mr Lloyd

Special measures monitoring inspection of Westgate Primary School

Following my visit with Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson, Seconded Inspector, to your school on 10-11 December 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 December 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 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 Kent.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - making better use of time in lessons to enable pupils to complete work that challenges them and increases their knowledge, understanding and skills
 - making sure that lessons and activities are sufficiently challenging and engaging for pupils of all abilities
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve and the rate at which learning should proceed
 - improving marking so that teachers' comments make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work, and providing time for them to make improvements.
- Rapidly accelerate progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for boys, by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to write well and at length, and to apply and develop their mathematical skills in meaningful contexts in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - closing the gaps in achievement between pupils supported through the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs, and other pupils
 - ensuring that pupils in Key Stage 2 use phonics skills systematically to read difficult words.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - using assessment information about pupils' progress more accurately and quickly to identify gaps in pupils' learning and to ensure that teachers address these
 - increasing the accuracy of monitoring and evaluation of progress in those areas where pupils underperform most significantly and hold subject and phase leaders more effectively to account for bringing about improvement
 - ensuring staff pay increases are linked to better performance
 - ensuring that governors hold the school robustly to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 10-11 December 2014

Evidence

The inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class. All visits to classrooms were carried out jointly with the executive headteacher or head of school. Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school (who is also the special educational needs coordinator), subject leaders for mathematics and English, a group of pupils, a group of teachers, a group of teaching assistants, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. The inspectors considered 28 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) and met with a group of parents invited by the school. The inspectors also attended an assembly, went into the playground at break, looked at pupils' workbooks and heard pupils read. The inspectors considered the governing body minutes, information about pupils' progress, and the school's records of checks made on the quality of teaching.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, two teachers have left and been replaced by experienced staff. The special educational needs coordinator returned after maternity leave but subsequently resigned. There were no suitable applicants when the post was advertised so this position is currently covered by the head of school. The arrangement with Manor Primary School to provide an executive headteacher has been extended. The head of school is continuing in post. Governors continue to explore a move to academy status.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The majority of pupils across the school work at the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils currently in Year 6 achieve as well as their peers, but the same is not true for these pupils in all year groups. In many classes, boys still fall behind girls in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are aware of the need to ensure progress is more consistent across the school.

Leaders rightly make teachers fully responsible for their pupils' achievement. They hold regular meetings to check on progress and help teachers decide the best way to assist pupils at risk of falling behind. However, targets for this work are not sharp enough to measure exactly how well pupils are doing, and if things are improving.

The recently introduced 'learning challenges' in mathematics ensure teachers check carefully exactly what pupils already know and can do. Pupils' workbooks show this new approach helps them make progress because they tackle tasks at just the right level of challenge. Pupils report, 'We know what level we're on, what we're working on and how we have improved.' It is too early to see the impact of this work on their long-term progress.

Pupils in Reception and Year 1 continue to be given a good grounding in phonics (the sounds that letters make). Further up the school, pupils now use their skills effectively in the new 'literature circles' which aim to develop their understanding in reading. They discuss stories with relish and deepen their thinking about their books. The enticing reading corners in every classroom, ranging from a spaceship to an enchanted forest, tempt pupils to read more regularly.

The quality of teaching

Teaching in the Reception class has improved. There is now a range of well-planned activities, both led by adults and chosen by the children themselves. Adults support children's learning very well because they work alongside them. Staff model how to tackle tasks and challenge children to extend their thinking. Skills in reading, writing and mathematics are developed effectively. This is achieved through motivating activities such as matching numbers on envelopes to the right number post box, and then posting the letters.

Teachers sometimes more often ask the right questions to help pupils think carefully about their learning but this is not always the case. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not focus well enough on exactly what they want pupils to learn. Their questions do not deepen pupils' understanding or help them think hard. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress.

Teaching assistants now know more clearly what they need to do because teachers direct them more effectively. They use their initiative well to ensure pupils they support get the right help, pinpointing what pupils need to succeed.

Teachers mark pupils' books regularly and often. However, the quality of comments remains inconsistent across the school. There are some good examples which help pupils to improve their work to a higher standard. At other times, teachers congratulate pupils too readily for work of low quality, missing opportunities to develop pupils' composition skills. Standards of presentation are also variable: pupils are not always encouraged to write clearly and legibly, which holds progress back.

The new 'enrichment weeks' at the end of each term help deepen pupils' understanding and apply what they have been taught to real life situations. For example, pupils in Year 2 enjoyed counting in fives to work out how much food to buy for their party. Parents value the invitation to see their child's work at the end of the week and pupils are motivated to do their best for this important audience.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of pupils are now very well behaved in lessons. They are ready to learn and try hard. They show good respect for others, listening carefully when classmates are speaking. Older pupils take responsibility through a range of jobs, such as organising music in assembly, house captains and school council. At

playtime, pupils play well with the wide choice of equipment. They say bullying is rare but if it does occur, teachers deal with it swiftly and effectively.

Attendance remains in line with the national average. School leaders work alongside social services or the education welfare officer to support families whose children do not attend regularly.

Systems to ensure pupils are safe and secure are effective. Pupils with medical needs are cared for well so they can join in all the activities on offer. The caretaker ensures the site is well maintained and attractive.

The quality of leadership in, and management of, the school

Leadership is developing at all levels. Senior leaders ensure each person plays their part in driving improvements. Communication is effective and everyone knows exactly what they are aiming for.

The school is becoming a welcoming place of learning. Adults provide good role models. They encourage pupils to try hard even if they find things tricky. The attractive displays celebrate pupils' achievements as well as supporting learning. They raise awareness of inspirational figures such as Mo Farah and Mary Seacole to help pupils aim high. Exciting challenges such as finding and counting stick insects motivate pupils to learn. Teachers say the whole-school themes, such as Celebration and Commemoration, help to draw everyone together.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics receive helpful training to develop their roles. They successfully introduced 'learning challenges' in mathematics and 'literature circles' in reading. Teachers are confident to approach these leaders for help because they feel they will offer useful support. However, subject leaders' action plans do not show exactly what they want to achieve, how they will achieve it and how they will check success. As a result, they are not yet effective tools to develop teaching and raise standards. The checks subject leaders make on teaching and learning have limited impact. They do not focus sharply enough on the right questions to be able to judge the quality of teachers' work. Their reports do not set out exactly what improvements have been made and what remains to be tackled to help teachers know their next steps.

Parents express confidence in how the school is improving. They like the new 'learning challenges' because their children know what they need to achieve. They appreciate the wider range of clubs such as drumming, construction and football, which enhance pupils' experiences. Homework is now more consistent and parents understand what is expected. They say the head of school is always available and very approachable.

Governors have set out a useful timetable to monitor the school's work. Their visits help them to understand exactly what the school is aiming for and how well it is making progress. They check important areas such as safeguarding arrangements

are fully in place and ensure that teachers' pay awards are linked to their performance.

Governors continue to explore a move to academy status. They have agreed that the current leadership arrangements will remain in place until a final decision is reached. This enables continuity for the school.

External support

The local authority provides useful support to help the school's leaders identify their next steps. Governors appreciate the guidance from the local authority to develop their systems to check how well the school is doing. The links with Manor Primary School are very beneficial to support improvements to teaching and learning.