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5 December 2014

Mr Jonathan Brookes
Headteacher
Inkersall Primary School
Inkersall Green Road
Chesterfield
S43 3SE

Dear Mr Brookes

Special measures monitoring inspection of Inkersall Primary School

Following my visit with Karen Bramwell, Associate Inspector, to your school on 3–4 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014. 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.

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 Children's Services for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority
cc. The Secretary of State

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
 - increasing the accuracy of teachers' assessments and using these to set work at the right level of difficulty for different groups of pupils
 - improving the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) so that activities are more closely matched to pupils' abilities in order to move learning on more quickly
 - ensuring that pupils know what they are expected to do, especially when completing written work
 - checking pupils' understanding in mathematics lessons and quickly correcting any misconceptions
 - moving learning on more quickly when children are learning through play in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Make sure that all groups of pupils make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - providing effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - providing a sound framework for both boys and girls to make good progress in writing, particularly in literacy lessons and ensuring that teachers are sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable in the teaching of writing
 - providing pupils with regular and systematic opportunities to develop their basic mathematical skills
 - checking carefully on the attainment and progress of groups of pupils, in particular, boys and those eligible for support through the pupil premium, and better meeting the needs of these pupils, by providing support to help them catch up.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, in order to improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - pupils' progress is rigorously tracked and analysed to identify any underachieving groups and take appropriate action to accelerate their progress

- the school's self-evaluation is accurate and that the school development plan is focused on securing improved teaching and achievement across the school
- pupil premium funding is used for the benefit of eligible pupils throughout the school
- the governing body acquires the necessary skills to ask searching questions and be rigorous in its monitoring, in order to hold the school to account.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 3–4 December 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, several subject leaders, a group of pupils and representatives of the local authority. Inspectors spoke informally with several parents at the beginning of the school day. A telephone conversation was also held with the Chair of the Interim Executive Board. Inspectors visited all classes to observe teaching and learning, and they evaluated a sample of pupils' work.

Context

A new headteacher took up post in September 2014. One teacher is currently on extended absence due to illness. The school is currently undertaking a consultation on academisation. An interim executive board has been in place since 13 October 2014.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's latest tracking information shows that pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are making better progress than they were when the school was judged to require special measures. This is the case for all groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those eligible for the pupil premium funding. However, attainment remains well below average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Even with the recent improvements in their progress, pupils' levels of attainment when set against national age-related expectations are well below average in many year groups. The school knows that this situation needs correcting urgently if pupils are not to be disadvantaged when they transfer to the next stage of their education.

The school has begun to put procedures in place to tackle underachievement but, as yet, they are not consistently applied in all classes. The pace of pupils' progress varies across year groups. There is evidence of some rapid progress in Years 5 and 6, but slower progress in Years 1, 2, 3 and 4. Where rates of progress remain slow, pupils are not making up quickly enough the lost ground in their learning from their legacy of prior underachievement. This is sometimes because pupils, particularly the more able, are not stretched enough to make more rapid progress. Often their work is too easy. For example, in a mathematics lessons, pupils demonstrated at the start that they understood the work and would not be learning anything new, but they still had to complete the tasks set. Lesson observations confirmed the school's data and showed a mixed picture of pupils sometimes making rapid progress and sometimes more modest progress during lessons.

Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and make at least the progress they should. However, the progress of children in the Reception Year is inadequate. Many

of those pupils who have joined Year 1 this year remain ill prepared for formal learning, especially in their ability to write.

The quality of teaching

The actions taken by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning are bearing some fruit. Expectations of what pupils are capable of are higher; planning is more consistent; there is a more systematic approach to improving pupils' phonics; the presentation of pupils' work is improving; and the quality and rigour of the schools' assessment systems have improved. All staff are receiving a good range of training and have had the opportunity to observe outstanding practice in another school. The better progress now evident in pupils' books reflects an increasing proportion of good teaching.

In lessons where pupils make the fastest progress in their learning, the work is pitched at the right level to challenge and motivate pupils. Questioning is used effectively to correct misconceptions and develop understanding. Pupils are increasingly encouraged to work on their own and to use and apply the skills they are learning to complete exciting learning activities. As a result, pupils are becoming more confident and ambitious learners.

Senior leaders are aware that there is an over-reliance on the use of commercial worksheets in many classes which sometimes hinders pupils' learning.

There are some improvements to the school's approach to marking. Some teachers are marking pupils' work more carefully and beginning to provide constructive feedback about the next steps they need to take to move their learning on. However, marking is not yet consistently linked to pupils' targets or success criteria.

The quality of teaching and learning in the Reception Year is inadequate. Teachers do not plan an appropriate play-based curriculum and children are not challenged to achieve well. Systems to assess and monitor how well children's skills are improving are not robust. They are overgenerous and are not used effectively to inform planning or the next steps for individual children. Children do not develop positive attitudes to learning to take forward into Year 1.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils appreciate the improvements being made to their education. Around the school they are polite, friendly and considerate. In many lessons, they cooperate well together and demonstrate an improving attitude to learning. However, in some classes, pupils' attitudes to learning are not good enough. This is sometimes because the work does not capture their interest or because pupils have established poor working skills in previous years when they were subject to inadequate teaching. All staff are endeavouring to change these working habits and to cultivate a love of learning in all pupils.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The school improvement plan has been revised since the first monitoring visit in May. It now identifies clear measures of progress for the end of each term.

The ambitious and perceptive new headteacher is driving the momentum of improvement by establishing a culture of high expectations. He is supported strongly by the deputy headteacher. Together, they are identifying weaknesses quickly, addressing them effectively and taking urgent actions to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school.

Subject leaders are rising to the challenge of rapid school improvement and demonstrating a better understanding of their responsibilities. Consequently, they are leading school improvement more successfully than in the past. They recognise that they need to continue to develop some of their skills, such as observing lessons, so that they can give accurate advice to teachers on how to improve their teaching. Leaders at all levels demonstrate an increasing capacity to sustain school improvement.

The initial improvements being seen in pupils' progress are underpinned by improvements in management systems. Assessment information is being collected efficiently and analysed by school leaders and teachers. Procedures to manage the performance of teachers and other staff are much more rigorous and pertinent to whole-school improvement. Teachers have a better balance of challenge and training to achieve personal targets for improvement. Consequently, pupils are beginning to benefit from better help and teaching.

The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has recently been assigned to the deputy headteacher on a temporary basis. He has already undertaken an audit of resources and the classroom environment. As a result, the refurbishment of one classroom is due to be completed before the end of this term and new resources have been ordered.

The interim executive board is spending a considerable amount of time overseeing the proposed move to a sponsored academy. Board members are aware of the main weaknesses that exist, particularly in teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and recognise that they have a vital role in supporting and challenging the headteacher so that the right decisions for future school improvement are made.

External support

The school is receiving good support from the local authority which is well tailored to its needs. Local authority consultants are providing a range of training and support, including undertaking an audit of phonics provision and providing subsequent

training to all staff, coaching subject leaders in detailed work scrutiny, and supporting moderation of writing across the school. The link adviser makes regular visits to the school and these are helpful in reinforcing key messages. This good support is being followed through in a coherent and rigorous way by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements. Additional support to address the concerns in the Reception class is currently being considered by the local authority's senior adviser.