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11 December 2014

Mr Adrian Bagnall
Headteacher
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Magnolia Close
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Doncaster
South Yorkshire
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Dear Mr Bagnall

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kirk Sandall Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 9 and 10 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 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 Interim Director Children and Young People's Service for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and so that all pupils make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching
 - teachers making good use of assessments to ensure they provide work that challenges pupils of varying abilities, particularly the most able and those of middle ability
 - teachers planning lesson activities which engage and maintain pupils' interest so that their behaviour and attitudes to learning are always at least good
 - insisting on high standards of pupils' written work and handwriting
 - improving pupils' use of grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - ensuring lessons move forward at a good pace and giving pupils good opportunities to use their reading, writing and mathematical skills in as many ways as possible
 - making sure all teachers adhere to the marking policy and are consistent in giving pupils clear advice on improving their work
 - making sure that at the end of lessons teachers comprehensively check with pupils what they have learnt and they make clear their next steps in learning.

- Urgently improve leadership and management, including governance, so that improvement is driven forward rapidly by:
 - ensuring all staff have high expectations about the quality of their own teaching and what each pupil is capable of achieving
 - improving the rigour with which leaders at all levels check on the quality of teaching so that weaknesses are identified quickly and plans put in place to remedy these
 - providing a high level of professional development for teachers so they know and understand what constitutes good teaching and learning
 - sharpening the focus in managing teachers' performance so that they are held to greater account for pupils' progress and improving their teaching
 - developing the roles of middle leaders so that they make an effective contribution to driving improvement in their subjects
 - undertaking a review of governance, 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 9 and 10 December 2014.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the headteacher and members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). The inspector spoke to parents informally at the end of the first day. A group of pupils in Years 4 and 5 met with the inspector and a number of pupils discussed their learning with the inspector during lessons. The inspector looked at pupils' work with senior leaders and spent time in the playground. This inspection focused on improvements to the quality of teaching and how effectively leaders are bringing about improvements.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection four teachers have left the school. Six new teachers have been appointed, including a new literacy coordinator and the inclusion leader.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress is improving and they are beginning to catch up on the ground they lost in earlier years as a result of previously inadequate teaching. However, despite making a good start this year, pupils in Year 6 still have a long way to go if they are to fulfil the potential they showed at the end of Key Stage 1, particularly with their writing skills. The most able pupils are becoming more adept at checking their own work for errors but this is not consistent. There are still times when they make basic mistakes such as forgetting to use capital letters for proper nouns, such as names.

Year 3 pupils have settled in well. The careful work teachers did with the staff of the infant school is paying dividends and pupils are getting off to a stronger start.

Leaders are implementing a new approach to tracking progress. This is helping teachers to be more precise about the skills pupils have mastered and equally where there are gaps in their learning. This is in the early stages and so it is too soon to judge its effectiveness. However, the gaps in the progress made by different groups of pupils throughout the school remain inconsistent. For example, boys in Year 6 make better progress in mathematics than girls but their progress is more even in reading.

Pupils generally expect and want to work hard. They are taking more care with the presentation of their work but there are times when they do not take as much care as they should. This is more apparent when pupils are tackling new forms of writing such as diaries or play scripts. Presentation in mathematics is stronger than in other subjects and there are helpful photographic displays showing teachers' expectations. In other subjects, such as science, improvements are not as clear and work in pupils' books shows that pupils frequently do the same work at the same level of difficulty regardless of their ability.

Pupils are becoming more resilient in taking charge of their own learning. They know they need to ask a friend or use the resources, such as wall displays, when they get stuck. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are also getting better at working

things out for themselves because teaching assistants have improved the way they ask questions and support pupils' learning.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has been strengthened by the skills of teachers new to the school and the tailored training leaders have provided for all teachers. Work in pupils' books show teachers' marking is continuing to improve. There are, however, some inconsistencies and there are still odd occasions when teachers make sloppy mistakes, such as spelling errors when they are correcting pupils' work. Pupils report they get frequent opportunities to respond to teachers' comments but this does not happen every time and occasionally pupils repeat mistakes the teacher has already pointed out. Teachers have agreed with pupils what is 'non-negotiable' in their work and this includes pupils checking that they always use full stops and capital letters but there are times when this is not enforced firmly enough.

Teachers have worked hard to develop their questioning skills. There are examples of teachers using questions effectively to probe pupils' understanding and help them develop sophisticated ideas. For example, as a result of the teachers' skilful questioning, a Year 6 pupil was able to talk sensitively about how fear might be confused with cowardice by soldiers fighting in the trenches during the First World War. However, this level of expertise is not fully consistent and there are still occasions when teachers let pupils, particularly the most able, off the hook too easily.

The recently appointed teachers have quickly become part of the team. Teaching staff work well together and share ideas. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to behave well. They are becoming increasingly confident in lessons, especially when they have the opportunity to wrestle with difficult problems and find solutions for themselves. One or two pupils report that they have experienced name-calling but they are satisfied that the school always deals with it firmly. Pupils have a great deal of faith in teachers and other adults to sort out any misbehaviour and they say they feel very safe. Pupils generally play well together on the playground. They are friendly, sociable and enjoy each other's company. However, there are occasions when games of 'tag' become over exuberant.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders, including members of the IEB, have made some important appointments which have stabilised staffing and reduced the need to use supply teachers. Middle leaders, including those who have recently joined the school, have taken up the task of improving teaching with vigour. They contribute to gathering information about the quality of teaching and work well with teachers to support them in improving their practice. It is still too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this team fully. Nevertheless, there are promising signs of improvement and leaders are beginning to take control of the school's future improvement.

Leaders are making sure training is responsive to any weaknesses or inconsistencies they spot when they are checking on the quality of pupils' work. For example, leaders noticed

that teachers' marking was not always in line with the school's policy, they followed this up with training at the next staff meeting and this helped teachers to understand exactly what was required, but, more importantly, why it was needed. As a result teachers are more confident in explaining to pupils what they need to do next to improve their work.

The IEB continues to provide robust challenge. Members of the IEB have a strong understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They do not shy away from making bold decisions. For example, they approved a significant investment in new reading books to support the new literacy coordinator to improve guided reading sessions. While it is too soon to see the impact of this investment, the IEB members have made their expectations clear. The IEB has also been effective in establishing teachers' appraisal and this links teachers' performance clearly to pay awards. However, individual teachers' targets are not sharp enough in spelling out leaders' expectations with regard to pupils' progress. The school continues actively to pursue becoming an academy.

The new appointments to the school combined with regular, and increasingly robust, checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' work have placed the school in a strong position to accelerate much needed improvements rapidly.

External support

The local authority continues to offer the school sharp challenge and support through regular visits and reviews. Leaders have found this objective and regular checking helpful in evaluating the quality of their work. The Brighter Futures Trust's support to the school has rightly reduced and now focuses on providing the school with access to valuable networks and partnerships. For example, one of the deputy headteachers worked with the deputy headteacher of the infant school to host a very well attended 'life after levels' training event for other schools.