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17 December 2014

Mr Andrew Knighton
Headteacher
Shield Row Primary School
King Edward VIII Terrace
Shield Row
County Durham
DH9 0HQ

Dear Mr Knighton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Shield Row Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 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 September 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator, representatives of the governing body including the Chair and a representative of the local authority's education development service. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated. Together with the headteacher I visited four lessons, observing learning, talking to pupils and looking at their work books.

Context

Since the inspection, a new Reception teacher has been appointed and a different teacher has taken responsibility for leading literacy and teaching the letters that sounds make (phonics), across the school. The local authority's education development service has brokered support from a local school judged to be good at

its last inspection, Burnside Primary school. The education development service is providing a wide range of advice, guidance and support.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Despite continued annoyance expressed by the headteacher at the judgement of special measures, he, the local authority and governors moved quickly after the inspection to tackle the concerns within the report. Actions are beginning to make a positive difference. For example, guidance and support from the education development service are aiding improvement in the teaching of phonics in the Reception. Support to the deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator is helping to develop their role in checking the quality of teaching, teachers' planning and assessment of pupils' work more accurately. There is still more to do to develop their skills and the role of the literacy coordinator and timely plans are in place for their continued development. However, neither they, the headteacher or teachers have opportunities planned to see outstanding teaching or leadership in other schools and this needs to happen, so they can learn from good practice outside the school and reflect on the strengths and areas that could improve in their own practice.

The governing body review and the review of the pupil premium (additional government money) required following the inspection are planned for January 2015 so have not happened yet. However, in the meantime, the education development adviser has trained governors in their role in monitoring and challenging the school more robustly. Governors have become more involved in the monitoring the school's work. For example, some have observed the quality of teaching with the headteacher and collectively they have developed a more robust performance management process for teachers that includes measurable targets for pupils' achievements in each class.

The local authority's statement for action is detailed and includes specific targets for improvement. It identifies the intensive early resource and support that is being provided and the phased exit from the support when leaders have built their own capacity to improve. Evidence of the impact of the local authority's work can be seen in the teaching of phonics, better planning in some classes and the increasing confidence and skills of the deputy and special educational needs coordinator. The school's improvement plan is also detailed and links effectively to the areas identified for improvement in the inspection report and the local authority's improvement plan. As yet there are too few measurable targets for improvement against which governors can evaluate the impact of actions. Leaders are aware of this and are amending the plan to tackle the weakness. Work is also taking place to ensure the

most recent inspection report and an updated report on the use and impact of the pupil premium are on the school's website before the Christmas break.

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 Corporate Director: Children's and Adults' Services for Durham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector