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Caroline Kiely
Executive Headteacher
Whitmore Park Primary School
Halford Lane
Coventry
CV6 2HG

Dear Ms Kiely

Special measures monitoring inspection of Whitmore Park Primary School

Following my visit with David Wolfson, Additional Inspector to your school on 16–17 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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, without prior consultation with the monitoring HMI.

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 Coventry.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- The Secretary of State

Annex

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

- Improve the teaching that requires improvement or is inadequate to good by:
 - making sure teachers plan lessons that are more challenging for all groups of pupils
 - giving pupils more time to complete their work by reducing the time teachers spend talking
 - making the lessons in all subjects much more interesting
 - raising the teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve in lessons
 - ensuring that teachers take full responsibility for the deployment of other adults in their lessons.

- Raise standards in English and mathematics to at least average by:
 - accelerating the progress made in lessons by all groups and particularly the most able pupils
 - using the pupil premium funding to help raise the standards of those pupils for whom it is intended
 - making sure that the quality of teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs does not vary widely from year to year.

- Strengthen the leadership and the governors' ability to fulfil their responsibilities by:
 - ensuring that the headteacher and senior leaders take a determined approach to driving improvement and do not hold back tackling weak practice
 - making sure that teachers are rewarded appropriately for their teaching
 - ensuring that new leaders have the skills necessary and support of senior leaders to fulfil their responsibilities
 - undertaking a review of the work of the governing body and taking action to strengthen governors' ability to take a strategic overview of school improvement and to challenge school leaders.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 16-17 December 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, headteacher, groups of pupils, parents, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit the school has federated with Willenhall Primary School, with a single governing body for both schools. The deputy headteacher of Whitmore Park Primary School has been appointed as its substantive headteacher. Thirteen teachers, including four newly qualified teachers, joined the school in September 2014 to replace staff who had left. The executive headteacher has overall responsibility for both schools and has taken on the role of special educational needs coordinator at Whitmore Park.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress has continued to improve throughout the school. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 remains below average, but is rapidly improving. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is now above average and more pupils are exceeding the level expected for their age. Pupils attained better than average results in the phonics check at the end of Year 1. There is now less variability in pupils' progress. Several changes of staff last year meant that attainment is lower than it should be in Year 4. Weaknesses in pupils' learning were not tackled and this slowed their progress. The school is now taking swift action to address gaps in pupils' understanding in Key Stage 2. Pupils' letter formation, spelling and mathematical skills are improving at a faster rate. The more-able pupils are beginning to tackle more challenging work and are achieving higher levels.

Information about the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those who have speech and language difficulties, is more reliable. Observations of pupils' learning in lessons and their work in books confirm that they are making better progress than at the time of the previous monitoring visit. In Key Stage 2, pupils supported through pupil premium funding make similar progress in lessons to other pupils but their attainment is lower because they have lower starting points. The school has continued its emphasis on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and is now beginning to tackle pupils' low attainment in other subjects. Pupils' progress in writing is still slower than in reading and mathematics. It is beginning to improve because teachers are creating more opportunities for pupils to write at greater length.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve. There is no longer any inadequate teaching. The re-grouping of staff into teams is enabling good practice to be shared among teachers more effectively. Pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills are improving because teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can do and are systematically tackling gaps in pupils' learning. The teaching of reading and writing is more consistent. Pupils in the early years and Key Stage 1 are keen writers and readers, and apply their skills confidently when decoding words. Learning in Key Stage 2 advances these skills well. Teachers encourage pupils to explain their thinking and this helps them to write down their ideas clearly.

Teachers' assessments have been moderated alongside those from Willenhall Primary School and are now more accurate. Teachers' planning is improving and work is better matched to pupils' different starting points. There is greater challenge for the more able. However, work planned for middle- and lower-attaining pupils does not always encourage them to think about more complicated ideas and use them in their work. This limits pupils' opportunities to achieve at higher levels.

Teaching assistants are now deployed more effectively. They help pupils to understand the work and to make faster progress. At times, some teaching assistants do not use the same technical language as the pupils use. This lowers expectations of what pupils can do and slows their progress.

Teaching in the education support classes has improved this is because work is better planned and makes good use of pupils' experiences. As a result, they are more engaged and keen to learn.

Teachers' marking continues to improve. Teachers mark pupils' literacy and numeracy work daily, and they use this on-going assessment to group pupils. Pupils are given time to complete work and make corrections where they are needed.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is improving and they are enthusiastic about learning. Pupils move around their classrooms sensibly, cooperate well and enjoy learning. They are courteous to visitors.

Attendance is in line with the national average and is improving. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is falling. Punctuality has improved greatly.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher and headteacher continue to work with determination to drive improvements in teaching and learning. Expectations of all staff are higher.

Underperformance is tackled swiftly and this, together with more robust performance management, has improved the quality of teaching. Expertise from across the federation is used effectively to help teachers to improve their practice. Newly qualified teachers and those who are new to the school or their role are supported well through the federation. Staff understand and support the school's ethos and its drive for improvement. The teaching consultant is used effectively to develop teachers' capacity to improve their performance. Teachers spoke positively about the support they have received.

Senior and middle leaders are more effective and are ambitious for school improvement. They have an increasingly accurate view of learning and use the new tracking systems to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. The school now has systems in place to analyse patterns and trends across all its assessment information. This is enabling middle leaders to take specific actions to improve the achievement, behaviour and attitudes to learning of different groups of pupils.

The school has tighter monitoring systems. Staff use them to bring increased rigour to their analyses of pupils' work and to check on their progress. Leaders are pinpointing more accurately what teachers and teaching assistants need to do to improve their practice.

The federation's experienced governing body is holding senior leaders to account with increasing effectiveness. All governors have had training on the use of the school's performance data. They use this information to challenge school leaders about the progress of different groups of pupils and promote improvement.

External support

The local authority continues to make well-judged and timely visits to the school. The work of consultants and staff from the federation is effective in supporting the school's improvements.