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Mrs Elaine Day
Headteacher
Carterton Primary School
Burford Road
Carterton
Oxfordshire
OX18 3AD

Dear Mrs Day

Special measures monitoring inspection of Carterton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 and 28 January 2015, 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 two newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and the 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 Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Moore
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers use the information they hold on pupils to plan learning activities that are not too easy or too difficult for the different groups in their classes, especially the more able pupils
 - pupils are provided with clear guidance on how to improve their work, with short-term targets that are linked to the learning tasks they are working on
 - teachers check the progress of their pupils more closely in lessons to make sure all groups of pupils are actively engaged in their learning
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve, especially the more able.
- Ensure that all pupils consistently make at least good progress in English and mathematics in all years groups, particularly Key Stage 1, by:
 - developing and consolidating pupils' basic skills in mathematics and providing opportunities for pupils to apply their skills with real-world practical tasks and in other subjects
 - ensuring that pupils are given more opportunities in subject areas other than English to develop their skills in a wider range of writing tasks, ensuring that pupils eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make faster progress and close the attainment gap with other groups.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - school leaders at all levels use information they hold about pupils' learning more efficiently to compare and evaluate the progress of different groups of pupils
 - a middle leadership team is developed that can effectively evaluate the quality of teaching and learning, and the improvements to the curriculum, and so support the senior leaders in their efforts to improve and develop the school
 - development plans have specific action points that identify how the school is going to move forward and how these initiatives are to be monitored and evaluated
 - the governing body holds the school to greater account by rigorously monitoring the impact of actions aimed at raising the achievement of different groups of pupils, and the school's use of additional funds, such as the primary sport grant and pupil premium funding.

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 management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 27 and 28 January 2015

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, a representative of the local authority, and a group of pupils. The inspector spoke to parents at the end of the school day. Eight lessons or parts of lessons were observed, six of which were conducted with senior leaders. The inspector analysed pupils' work and teachers' marking. Aspects of safeguarding were checked. The inspector spoke to pupils informally at break and lunchtimes. The inspector listened to pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection the interim head of school has been appointed as the substantive head of school. Four new teachers have joined the school. One of these new teachers has additional responsibility as the English and Key Stage 1 coordinator and another is the coordinator for the Early Years Foundation Stage. One teacher is absent on long-term sick leave and this class is being taught by a supply teacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement is improving overall and in some cases pupils are making accelerated progress. However, this progress is stronger in mathematics and reading than in writing. The gaps between the achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) and other pupils have closed significantly and in some cases these pupils are doing better than their classmates. More-able pupils are making better progress and are on track to reach higher standards. This is because teachers are setting work that is more closely matched to their abilities.

Younger pupils' achievement in phonics (the sounds letters and words make) is rising and is now in line with national averages because the teaching of early reading skills has improved.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are not always making similar progress to their peers. However, these issues have been identified by senior leaders and there are plans in place to address them.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving. Teachers are working hard to act on leaders' feedback to make necessary changes to their practice. As a result, more teaching is now good or better. Teachers are increasingly setting tasks that are closely matched to pupils' abilities. This is because teachers are using what they have learnt in recent

valuable training. Teachers are using detailed and accurate information about pupils' achievement to plan lessons. However, sometimes teachers do not move pupils on to more difficult work quickly enough when they have grasped an idea. As a result, pupils' attention wanes and their focus moves away from their work.

Throughout the school, pupils are being given more opportunities to write at length and for a variety of different purposes. For example, in an Early Years Foundation Stage session, children were keen to write labels for different parts of the human body. This work to improve pupils' writing skills is in its early stages and gaps remain in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Phonics are not being used enough to support pupils' writing. Senior leaders rightly recognise that the drive to improve pupils' writing skills needs to be sustained and embedded for pupils to make the progress they should.

Teaching assistants are giving effective support to pupils and have benefited from valuable training to develop their skills. As a result, they ask probing questions that extend and challenge pupils' understanding. In a Year 1 English lesson, a teaching assistant worked closely with a small group of pupils to make sure they understood the difference between open and closed questions.

Teachers' marking of pupils' work has improved. Pupils receive frequent and detailed feedback about how well they have done and what they need to do next. Pupils are now being given opportunities to respond to these comments and to make improvements to subsequent work. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said they valued this feedback from their teachers.

The quality of classroom environments has significantly improved. As a result, classroom displays are being used effectively by teachers and pupils to support learning. Pupils are proud to see their work displayed on the wall.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite, engaging and keen to learn. Sometimes when work is too easy, pupils lose concentration. The number of incidents of poor behaviour has decreased. Staff consistently apply systems for dealing with poor behaviour and rewarding good behaviour. As a result, pupils are clear about how they are expected to behave and they want to earn rewards for doing well. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that teachers are always there to help and support them. Attendance is in line with national figures because of effective strategies put in place by senior leaders, for example contacting parents swiftly when their child is absent from school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The head of school and the executive headteacher provide strong leadership. They are taking the right actions to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. The head of school's relentless focus on improvement means she continually checks the

progress being made and adjusts plans accordingly. Leaders are using a wide range of information, for example, from looking at pupils' work and visiting lessons, to form an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Senior leaders give teachers detailed and appropriate feedback about how they can improve further. Pupils' achievement is tracked more effectively and leaders are using this information to hold teachers to account robustly and to drive up standards.

Parents who spoke to the inspector feel that channels of communication between them and the school are more open and they feel more welcome on the school site. They appreciate the increased visibility and accessibility of the head of school. However, leaders have not engaged effectively with parents to help them support their children's reading and writing.

The mathematics coordinator has a good understanding of the strengths and what still needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement in the subject. He is taking effective action, for example by providing valuable training and by making appropriate changes to the way teachers plan mathematics lessons. As a result, standards in mathematics are rising. The English and Early Years Foundation Stage coordinators joined the school at the beginning of the term, so it is too early to see the impact of their work.

Governors check the school's progress in detail. Their frequent visits to the school enable them to collect valuable information about improvements. Governors are linked to specific areas of the school's work and this is helping them to check and challenge the progress being made. Valuable training in how to analyse information about pupils' achievement means governors are able to ask challenging questions of senior leaders.

External support

The local authority rightly feels that effective leadership and its impact mean that it no longer needs to continue its high level of support for the school. Since the last monitoring inspection, local authority advisers have given valuable support to mathematics, English and Early Years Foundation Stage leaders to refine their action plans and carry out lesson observations. Leaders and teachers have made good use of the continuing links with Carterton Community College, for example through the provision of booster lessons for more-able pupils taught by college staff.