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23 January 2015

Mrs G Tong
The Headteacher
Bedgrove Junior School
Ingram Avenue
Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire
HP21 9DN

Dear Mrs Tong

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bedgrove Junior School

Following my visit with Lynne Kauffman, Additional Inspector to your school on 21 and 22 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 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 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - activities pupils are given in lessons and the targets they have are always closely matched to what they need to learn next
 - adults who support pupils in lessons prompt and question them well
 - teachers have high expectations of the amount pupils are capable of doing and learning in lessons, and challenge them to think deeply
 - pupils are actively engaged in their learning throughout the lesson
 - teachers' written comments on pupils' work tell pupils clearly what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their performance.
- Ensure that phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught systematically to pupils who still have difficulty reading.
- Make sure that pupils have a clear understanding of what constitutes racist behaviour, its unacceptability and how to combat it, and that parents are properly notified of racist incidents.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring:
 - teaching is frequently and rigorously checked, and teachers given clear feedback on what to improve
 - subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator are fully involved in identifying and bringing about improvements
 - actions the school takes to improve are fully evaluated
 - judgements about how good the school is take into account a full range of evidence
 - governors hold the school's leaders fully to account for pupils' performance.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 January 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the interim executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils, a group of parents, two members of the interim executive board (IEB), the chair of the shadow governing body and two representatives from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust who act on behalf of the local authority. Inspectors observed 14 lessons and two assemblies, all of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders, and made short visits to a further six lessons. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour including at lunch and break times.

Context

The headteacher started full time in September 2014. The consultant headteacher left at the end of December 2014 and is now the monitoring officer for the school on behalf of Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. A shadow governing body is now in place. Seven teachers and four teaching assistants have left since the previous monitoring inspection, all of whom have been replaced.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 in reading, writing and mathematics showed some improvement. Pupils' current achievement, however, is much stronger, although some improvements are recent. Year 6 pupils, including the most able, are on track to attain more highly in 2015. Pupils' standards of presentation in their work are now much higher.

Pupils' writing, in particular, has improved. Pupils write at length frequently and the quality and accuracy of their writing is better. They apply their writing skills well in a range of subjects. Pupils' progress in reading continues to accelerate because of focused teaching of reading skills, including phonics (the sounds that letters make). Pupils generally enjoy reading, although not all make good use of the library. Pupils are not yet given sufficient opportunities to develop their mathematical skills in other subjects. Consequently, their progress in mathematics is not as rapid as it could be.

Better teaching, some of which has only recently improved, has not yet ironed out important inconsistencies in pupils' progress. Disadvantaged pupils have not made the same good start to Year 3 as other pupils, and their progress is slower in Year 5. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make slower progress in mathematics than other pupils. Their progress in reading in Years 3 and 4 and in writing in Years 5 and 6 is not as good as their peers.

The quality of teaching

Teachers have worked extremely hard to improve and this is paying off. They listen closely to leaders' advice and act on it promptly. Leaders have recruited wisely and new teachers to the school, some of whom have joined very recently, have made a great start. Consequently, teaching is better now than at any time since the inspection in July 2013.

Teachers' subject knowledge is increasing rapidly. They assess pupils' work accurately and use detailed information about pupils' achievement to make sure they set challenging work in lessons. Pupils are much clearer about what they need to do to succeed in lessons. Teachers rightly mark pupils' work frequently and make suggestions about how it could be improved. This advice is more precise in English than in mathematics. Teachers now give pupils more opportunities to improve their work. Teaching assistants continue to support pupils well in and out of lessons, including the most able pupils.

Homework is more profitable because it is contributing to pupils' improved progress. Pupils are regularly required to practise and apply at home what they have learned in lessons. Parents are now able to access homework via the school's website, which means that they know what their children should be doing and can support them when appropriate.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils now invariably find lessons interesting and fun. Relationships in lessons are stronger and these support pupils' learning well. Increasingly, there is a buzz of learning around the school. Pupils' concentration wanders very occasionally when tasks they are set do not fully stretch them. They now expect to be challenged every lesson. Pupils take pride in their work and their appearance. Standards of uniform have risen dramatically. Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour continues to strengthen. Pupils understand the school's 'golden rules' and follow them.

There have been no racist incidents since the last monitoring inspection. Pupils from different backgrounds mix more harmoniously and play safely together. They respect the differences that exist between each other more. Bullying is rare and dealt with very well. No pupils have been excluded. While attendance remains above average, it is lower for a small proportion of pupils, particularly some from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher has made an excellent start. Staff, pupils and parents agree. She has acted urgently and vigorously, focusing clearly on necessary improvements. As a result, pupils' progress continues to accelerate and teaching is improving rapidly.

The headteacher knows pupils and parents well, and she greets pupils and meets parents frequently on the playground before school. Communication with parents continues to flourish and the headteacher regularly updates parents about improvements that have been made, current developments and the training that staff are receiving.

Leaders have made sure that new teachers have hit the ground running. Teachers are held robustly to account for the quality of their teaching and the achievement of the pupils they teach. There are very effective processes in place to regularly monitor and evaluate teaching, although some elements of these are in their infancy. While year group leaders and subject leaders for English and mathematics play an integral part in these processes, they are not yet measuring their impact on pupils' achievement sharply enough. Leaders of other subjects have yet to have a significant role in improving provision, including adding real depth to the curriculum. Leaders continue to deliver well-targeted training to teachers and teaching assistants.

Members of the IEB continue to provide stiff challenge for school leaders, ensuring that the rate of the school's improvement has remained rapid. They manage the headteacher's performance effectively. A shadow governing body is now in place and plans are rightly well advanced for the new governing body to replace the IEB. The IEB has a new structure of subcommittees which reflects how the governing body will operate. As a result, the shadow governing body is well prepared to take over governance of the school in April 2015.

External support

External support has tapered since the last monitoring inspection because leaders are much better placed to improve the school themselves. Buckinghamshire Learning Trust continues to monitor the school very regularly, challenging leaders to provide solid evidence of improvement. Bedgrove Infant School has ceased to support the school. Instead, a strong and important partnership between the two schools is becoming well established.