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Ms A Brackstone
Executive Headteacher
New Town Primary School
School Terrace
Reading
RG1 3LS

Dear Ms Brackstone

Special measures monitoring inspection of New Town Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 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 October 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, the head of school, the Chair of the Governing Body, another governor and a representative from the local authority. We made brief visits to classrooms where I looked at work in books and I met with a group of pupils from Years 4 and 5. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and the local authority's statement of action. I also reviewed the school's record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children.

Context

Since the inspection, the deputy headteacher, who joined the school in September, has left. You have appointed an acting assistant headteacher and two temporary, part-time deputy headteachers.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Your strong, focused leadership has brought improvements in all the areas identified in the inspection report in October 2014. Under your guidance, with the support of the head of school, staff are clearer about what they need to do to improve and are committed to making the necessary changes to become more effective.

Leadership is improving. Middle leaders have had useful training to enable them to check teaching and analyse information on pupils' progress, which they are sharing well with teachers. You have sensibly planned regular time for leaders to work with teachers to plan, teach and assess together. This is helping weaker teachers to improve more quickly.

You have successfully eradicated inadequate teaching. In almost all lessons, we saw pupils making progress because teachers had planned relevant learning objectives and activities. In some classes there were not enough opportunities for pupils of different abilities to make as much progress as they could. Overall, the teaching we observed was not as strong as the teaching you have come to expect. This demonstrates that, although teaching generally is much improved, teachers have not yet embedded the effective teaching skills they have learned.

Achievement is improving but continues to be inconsistent. In several classes we saw considerable progress in writing; the progress in mathematics was less evident. All staff are now checking pupils' attainment regularly and there are signs that pupils in some classes are beginning to catch up to where they should be. To tackle the underachievement of the current Year 6 pupils, you have sensibly split the class into smaller teaching groups, working with strong teachers for English and mathematics. This is resulting in pupils accelerating their learning.

The improvements in behaviour are significant. You have introduced a new policy which is now used successfully by all staff. As a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons is much more appropriate. It is helping all pupils to learn more because there are significantly fewer interruptions. Rigorous behaviour logs provide a useful record of incidents, which you analyse to check behaviour is improving. These logs are not specific enough to help you to identify patterns of behaviours linked to individual pupils or teachers.

The school's action plan details clearly how improvements will be made in teaching, but some areas for improvement are not as clear as they need to be. There are no specific actions to improve reading, nor does the plan show who will lead the actions and when they will be undertaken. It is essential that these details are added to the plan in order to sustain the current improvements and make further gains. These

changes will also help leaders to check progress. The required review of the school's use of the pupil premium grant has not been undertaken.

Governors recognise what the school needs to do to improve and have taken useful steps to support and challenge leaders. They ensure information they have requested is accessible and helpful. The governors and local authority have agreed that it is in the school's best interests to replace the governing body with an Interim Executive Board while the school is subject to special measures. This is because of the difficulties the school has in recruiting governors with the necessary skills to support the school's improvement. An application has been made to the Department for Education. As a result, the review of governance has not been undertaken.

The local authority's intervention and support have been effective in getting the leadership of the school in place to begin making improvements. The local authority advisors are providing useful support and training for teachers and leaders, resulting in improved classroom practice and better checking of teaching and learning. In the statement of action, the local authority has made a commitment to provide a significant amount of support, but there is a lack of clarity in the statement about how improvements will be made, especially to teaching and subject leadership.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in consultation with me.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Reading. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams
Her Majesty's Inspector