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30 January 2015

Mrs Sharon Mullins
The Headteacher
Gateway Primary School
Netheravon Close
Carterton, Oxfordshire
OX18 3SF

Dear Mrs Mullins

Special measures monitoring inspection of Gateway Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 January, 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 November 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.

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 Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be at least good or better throughout the school and so raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring:
 - teaching is consistently challenging and activities move at a brisk pace to keep pupils engaged and focused on learning
 - teachers plan activities and ask questions to challenge pupils at their different ability levels
 - teachers make careful checks in lessons on pupils' understanding and intervene quickly to correct any misunderstanding
 - that teachers provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful context in a range of subjects
 - high-quality marking is used consistently across the school to show pupils clearly how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work
 - staff receive more guidance and training on the school's policies for managing pupils' behaviour and for encouraging positive attitudes to learning so that all staff follow the policy in the same way.

- Improve the impact of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that school improvement plans show clearly the intended impact of actions on pupils' achievement
 - providing training for middle leaders and managers so that they improve their skills of monitoring and evaluation
 - ensuring the school's assessment and tracking system accurately reflects pupils' work
 - developing the role of the governing body further so that it supports and challenges the school more effectively.

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 28 and 29 January 2015

Evidence

During this monitoring inspection, 12 lessons were observed, including six jointly with senior leaders. I met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, middle leaders and a representative from the local authority. I also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and the executive headteacher of Carterton Primary School and Carterton Community College. I scrutinised school documents, including records of leaders' monitoring, minutes from the governing body and task group meetings and local authority notes of visit. I met with a group of pupils, spoke to pupils in lessons and scrutinised a sample of pupils' books from all year groups. The single central record was checked.

Context

Since my last visit, a teacher in Year 2 who had been absent long term has left. A temporary teacher is teaching this class. A teacher with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs and a Year 3 class has resigned and will leave at Easter. A job-share teacher in a mixed Year 4 and Year 5 class has resigned. The other job-share teacher will take full-time responsibility from Easter.

Last term, the school, together with Carterton Primary School and Carterton Community College, federated their governing bodies to form Carterton Federation of Schools, Gateway to Excellence. Since then, two new governors have joined. The federated governing body is considering the possibility of becoming an academy under a sponsorship arrangement.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Leaders are maintaining the improvements to pupils' learning and progress seen at the previous visit. Leaders' own records show that a greater proportion of pupils are on track to meet the standards expected for their age. Systems to monitor progress are now much stronger. How well pupils are doing is recorded regularly. More pupils are now achieving the higher levels in mathematics, reading and writing than in previous years. However, leaders do not compare closely enough the attainment of different groups of learners. For example, leaders need to compare the achievement of disadvantaged pupils to that of their peers to make sure gaps in attainment narrow more quickly.

The progress that pupils make in developing their early reading skills is too slow. Too many pupils in Year 1 are not achieving the standards they are capable of. Leaders have made well-judged changes and have introduced a different approach to teaching reading very recently. Teachers and teaching assistants now take charge

of smaller groups of pupils at similar stages of learning to read. However, the overall quality of phonics teaching is too variable, resulting in insecure understanding of letters and sounds for some pupils. Some activities are not well matched to what pupils already know. When this happens pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.

Standards in the early years are improving. Useful support from St Swithuns C of E Primary School is contributing well to developing this key stage. Children are making better progress and gaining skills and knowledge well. They are better prepared for Year 1 than has been the case in the past.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving steadily. Leaders have established clearer expectations for marking pupils' work and giving feedback. All books are now marked regularly. Where marking and feedback are most effective, pupils respond appropriately to the teachers' comments and try their best to improve their skills and understanding. However, variability persists because in some classes, pupils are not routinely encouraged to act on the comments made. As a result, they are less clear about what they have done well or what they need to improve next time. In lessons where pupils make good progress, teachers confidently capture what pupils know and reshape tasks appropriately across the next sequence of lessons.

Teachers are receiving useful coaching, particularly from the assistant headteacher, to develop their skills and expertise. For example, teachers' planning now includes a greater emphasis on what pupils are expected to achieve. Consequently, teachers tailor activities to build more closely on pupils' different starting points. Teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is particularly noticeable in writing. Pupils' productivity has increased over the course of the year. They now use a wider range of techniques to organise their writing more competently. Pupils in Year 3 were able to describe the items Paddington Bear would need to climb Ben Nevis, by organising their ideas into clear paragraphs using subheadings. Pupils' mathematical reasoning is developing well. They successfully use their computation skills to solve a variety of mathematical problems. As the level of challenge increases, pupils' greater enjoyment is clear to see.

Pupils with special educational needs are increasingly well catered for in lessons. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 were making good gains with their understanding of division by using apparatus to complete calculations. Greater use of practical apparatus is deepening pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts effectively. Teaching assistants effectively support group activities, using skilled questioning to advance pupils' understanding. They have received helpful training and their contribution to supporting small groups of learners, rather than just individuals, is developing successfully. As a result, pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, are making better progress than in the past.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Improvements to attendance have been sustained and more pupils now attend regularly than in the past. Leaders have gathered the views of pupils and they are more positive about the school. In a recent survey, the majority of pupils noted they were happy at school. Pupils say they particularly enjoy writing activities.

Pupils listen well and are more involved in their learning. They show increasing persistence to master a new skill or curiosity to explore mathematical patterns. In a mathematics lesson, pupils were enthusiastically exploring the rules of divisibility. They were able to use mathematical language competently and worked diligently to explore patterns.

Safeguarding procedures are thorough. Governors have supported leaders by conducting a helpful audit to make sure that policies and procedures are comprehensive. Leaders have ensured the checks made on adults working in school are appropriate. The single central record is fully compliant. Governors have firmed up plans to improve the security of the school site.

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve. Without exception, the inspector was welcomed to each class and pupils were keen to explain the activities they were undertaking. Pupils display a growing sense of pride and positive attitude to school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and assistant headteacher are ambitious for the school's future and are successfully maintaining the momentum of improvement. The headteacher is meticulously identifying the right priorities at the right time. The changes being made are appropriate, timely and planned so that staff are not overloaded with too many initiatives. Consequently, both teaching and learning are improving.

Systems for monitoring teaching are thorough. Senior leaders are accurate in judging the quality of teaching and are highly focused on making sure that it becomes consistently good. Although teaching is improving, more needs to be good or better. Where teaching is weaker, pupils are able to describe what they are doing but are less clear on what they are learning.

Middle leaders are developing their skills well. The mathematics leader has completed the Maths Specialist Teacher Programme (MAST) and the English leader the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL). They have begun to make useful checks on how well pupils are learning. They now regularly look at pupils' work and have recently begun to undertake lesson observations alongside senior leaders. Their careful checks are helping to ensure staff apply new

initiatives consistently to their own practice. However, middle leaders are yet to evaluate the difference they are making to teaching and learning.

The newly federated governing body has met regularly and effectively holds leaders to account. Governors have planned appropriate monitoring activities to ensure that they gather information first hand. Although these activities are at an early stage, a useful visit looking at the provision for phonics was helpful to school leaders. Governors have a high level of expertise and are astute at recognising what needs to be done next.

External support

The local authority continues to provide useful support and monitor the school systematically. The task group meets regularly with senior leaders. The newly appointed school improvement officer has recently visited to meet with senior leaders and review the school's requirements. Helpful support for mathematics and phonics is ongoing. As the school steadily improves, officers are rightly considering the type of support needed. The local authority is committed to securing additional support for the school, particularly to help teachers develop their skills and expertise further. They recognise a more bespoke approach would now be of benefit.