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16 February 2015

Mrs Janice Porter
Headteacher
Ryton Junior School
Main Road
Ryton
Tyne and Wear
NE40 3AF

Dear Mrs Porter

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ryton Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 12 February 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 November 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, three governors, two representatives of the local authority, and the school staff. During a tour of the school with the executive headteacher, brief visits were made to lessons to look at pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour. The school's single central record, which contains checks on the appointment of staff, was reviewed. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, who will both take up post after half term, were present at appropriate meetings.

Context

Since the inspection the school has suspended the soft federation with Ryton Infant School. The executive headteacher, who currently has overall responsibility for the two schools, will return to leading only the infant school from half term. The current head of school will leave the school at the same time. An acting headteacher, seconded from a school within the local authority for four days per week, will take up post after half term until the end of the academic year, along with an acting deputy headteacher who has been appointed from within the school staff. One additional governor has been appointed.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The executive headteacher, in conjunction with the link inspector from the local authority, has drawn up an improvement plan to tackle the weaknesses identified in the recent inspection. Unfortunately, the plan does not cover the likely time period until the next inspection and assumes that the school will make all necessary improvements by June 2015, which is unrealistic. The new acting headteacher, who knows the school and the staff well, will now revise the plan as a matter of urgency to ensure that actions are prioritised, cover the appropriate timescales and have clear milestones and measurable outcomes. She will also ensure that the plan can be regularly monitored by the steering committee of the governors.

The review of the pupil premium (additional government money) required following the inspection has been carried out by the local authority. The review recommends that a senior member of staff should take responsibility for checking the progress of these children so that the funding can be better targeted at these pupils. These recommendations should be actioned as soon as possible.

The review of the governing body is scheduled to be completed in the near future, although governors have recently carried out a skills audit. As a result, the governing body has restructured its work so that governors' roles are more clearly defined and appropriate to individual skills. The governors' steering committee currently meets once a term to monitor the work of school leaders, but this is not frequent enough to monitor the impact of changes.

During my tour of the school, both in lessons and in informal discussions over lunchtime, pupils were responding positively to teachers and engaging fully with their learning. The school was calm and orderly and no incidents of disruptive behaviour were observed during this visit. All staff have now been trained in how to recognise and tackle any incidences of homophobic bullying and systems for recording any behaviour incidents which do occur have been strengthened.

The local authority's statement for action was not available as required before the inspection and was only provided on the day. The statement is thorough and contains appropriate actions, but lacks detailed monitoring and evaluation procedures to check on progress. As with the school improvement plan, it assumes that issues at the school will be addressed in a very short period of time. This is not realistic. The plan does not explain how the school will build leadership capacity so that support can be withdrawn.

The implementation of post-inspection plans should make sure that:

- the timescales for all actions are realistic
- they include milestones against which progress can be measured within the plan
- leaders focus on an evaluation of their actions, rather than their completion, and use the outcomes of each assessment to determine next steps
- the steering committee meets more regularly on a half-termly basis to monitor and report progress against the criteria set in the plan.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

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

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely,

David Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector