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Mr Ashley Howard
Headteacher
Manor Infant School
Inverness Road
Portsmouth
PO1 5QR

Dear Mr Howard

Special measures monitoring inspection of Manor Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 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 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 May 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 Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring there is no inadequate teaching in Year 1 as a matter of urgency and ensuring good or better teaching for all pupils
 - improving the way undesirable behaviour is managed, and the teaching of classroom routines in Year 1
 - improving teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge, so that they have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure they always match learning tasks to the needs of all pupils
 - improving the teaching of reading and phonics in Reception and Key Stage 1 and giving the least able pupils opportunities to read every day.
- Accelerate pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in order to ensure more pupils reach at least the levels expected for their age at the end of Reception and Year 2 by:
 - improving pupils' understanding of sounds and letters and their ability to use their skills when reading and writing
 - teaching pupils to form their letters correctly and teaching lower-attaining pupils how to write in sentences
 - providing consistent challenge for more able pupils in mathematics in Key Stage 1
 - increasing purposeful play activities in reading and writing in Reception and ensuring children are always sufficiently challenged.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance by:
 - taking a consistent and well-considered stance to tackling incidents of poor behaviour
 - enlisting the help of specialist agencies to draw up personal behaviour improvement plans for pupils in most need and ensuring staff are trained to implement them
 - ensuring teachers are fully trained to implement the behaviour policy and that senior leaders closely monitor its impact
 - implementing clear and effective procedures, including working closely with families, to raise attendance rapidly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels and the school's capacity to improve by:
 - revising management structures and systems so that roles and responsibilities are clear
 - ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels are held to account for the impact of their work in helping the school to improve
 - rigorously checking the impact that teaching and subject planning have on pupils' progress, and taking quick and effective action to improve teaching and pupils' progress where needed
 - developing whole-school planning for the teaching of phonics, writing and mathematics, which promotes good progression of pupils' basic skills

- improving the skills of the governing body in holding the school's leaders fully to account for pupils' achievements, including linking teachers' pay to their performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 February 2015

Evidence

During this monitoring inspection, eight lessons were observed, all jointly with senior leaders. I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and a representative from Portsmouth Education Improvement Service. I also met with the Chair and another member of the Governing Body. I scrutinised school documents, including records of leaders' monitoring, minutes from the governing body and local authority notes of visits. I 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 part-time teacher in a Reception class has left. A part-time temporary teacher teaches this class. A full-time teacher in a different Reception class is absent. This class is taught by a temporary teacher. After a period of shadowing the interim executive board (IEB), the governing body has now taken full responsibility for the governance of the school. Three members of the IEB have continued as governors. A new parent governor has joined. The governing body continues to explore academy status under a sponsorship arrangement. Since my last visit, the Chair of Governors has visited two potential sponsors. No firm decisions have been taken.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Leaders have accelerated the improvements to pupils' learning and progress seen at the previous visit. In reading, writing and mathematics, the proportion of pupils making even better progress than that expected of them has risen and exceeds previous years. Pupils who were affected by poor teaching in the past are catching up and more are achieving the standards expected of their age.

Teaching and learning in Early Years are improving. Children are making better progress and gaining skills and knowledge well. Reception classes are well resourced. Teachers plan carefully, using the information they gather about children's learning, to ensure activities support children's next steps. Children respond well and are highly motivated by the school's thematic approach to teaching different subjects. Teachers plan well-structured activities around the theme, currently dinosaurs, which promote the development of children's skills. Children are better prepared for Year 1 than has been the case in the past.

Leaders are beginning to use information they gather to compare the achievement of different groups of learners more effectively. Pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding (additional government funds for pupils in receipt of free school meals and those in local authority care) are achieving higher standards. The gap in their

achievement compared to that of other pupils in the school is narrowing. In writing, disadvantaged pupils are a term behind their classmates and in reading and mathematics the gap has reduced to approximately half a term. At the same point last year, this group were a term and a half behind their peers.

Although it is below the national average, the school has a significant proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. A renewed focus on developing pupils' early reading skills is ensuring this group make better progress in reading and writing. In a Reception class, children completed a variety of practical activities and developed their understanding of particular sounds well.

The level of challenge for most able learners is underdeveloped. Senior leaders know that work needs to be more demanding in every lesson if these pupils are going to learn as well as they should. In some lessons, pupils have to complete the same tasks as others before they are given more challenging work. When this is the case, opportunities to deepen their understanding are missed.

The quality of teaching

Teachers have higher expectations. Pupils are much clearer about what they are learning and, as a result, are more enthused by lessons than in the past. Pupils develop skills and practise them more regularly. Consequently, pupils' productivity has increased considerably from previous terms. Pupils write often and at length, including in subjects such as science and design and technology. Pupils are encouraged to edit and improve their work as a matter of course.

Teachers are making better use of the information they gather about how well pupils are doing. Activities for middle and lower attaining pupils are well-matched to pupils' starting points. Teachers make more frequent and astute references to previous learning and ask helpful questions to explore pupils' understanding further. Pupils consolidate their skills and knowledge well. As a result, they are growing in confidence in their capabilities and making better progress.

Leaders recognise that pupils' skills in reading have been underdeveloped in the past. Revisions to the way reading is taught are already making a difference. Small group activities are commonplace and pupils respond enthusiastically to this new approach. Opportunities such as the newly established reading café encourage families to share books more often. Pupils are reading more regularly to and with adults. Their decoding and early reading skills are developing well. Pupils are making up lost ground effectively and developing a love of reading.

Teachers' planning for different subjects and for different ability groups is improving. In mathematics, teachers plan opportunities for pupils to use calculation strategies more widely. As a result, pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills are developing well. Pupils in a Year 1 class were able to use their understanding of place value to

solve money problems successfully using 10p and 1p coins. Pupils with special educational needs are enjoying more success as activities are more suited to their needs. In addition, skilful support from teaching assistants is helping these pupils to learn well and acquire new skills.

The quality of teachers' marking and feedback to pupils has improved. Most teachers are providing useful feedback to help pupils know what they need to do better in their work. Leaders have revised the marking and feedback policy. Comments in pupils' books helpfully emphasise pupils' understanding and reasoning. Pupils particularly enjoy using the 'purple polishing pens' to edit or correct their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is improving and generally positive. They remain focused on tasks for longer and with greater enthusiasm. Pupils are regularly encouraged to think more deeply. For example, pupils in a Year 2 class offered a good variety of adventurous vocabulary when editing a shared piece of writing. One pupil offered the description 'sizzling hot', causing a classmate to respond enthusiastically with 'that's so much better!' Pupils' pride and engagement in learning are developing well.

Pupils listen well because the quality of teaching is improving. They say that the new system of 'pegs' is helping them to manage their own behaviour better. However, there are still occasional incidents where pupils lose focus and cause distraction to others.

Incidents of unacceptable behaviour have continued to fall, as has the number of exclusions. Leaders know they need to reduce further as both remain too high. The recording and analysis of incidents is thorough and leaders consider carefully how to support pupils and encourage good behaviour.

Pupils with behavioural, social and emotional needs are receiving more personalised support. They benefit from visits to 'The Rockpool', where skilled teaching assistants deliver specific programmes to help develop their learning and social skills. There are higher expectations of these pupils to use these skills successfully back in the classroom. Pupils with specific difficulties are achieving a greater level of success alongside their peers. Leaders are utilising a wider range of external agencies to help families who need support.

Pupils are well cared for. Staff know pupils well and display a high degree of care and expertise in supporting and encouraging pupils to do their best, including those who are experiencing unsettling or difficult times. All aspects of safeguarding meet statutory requirements. During my visit, small administrative adjustments to the single central record were made and it now complies with the most recent legislation. The school places an appropriate high priority on safeguarding and child protection. This aspect of the school's work is monitored rigorously.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are orchestrating change very effectively and with a high degree of commitment to improving the school. As a result, the pace of improvement is accelerating as the quality of teaching gets better and standards rise. Leaders have made well-judged changes at the right times, which are clearly understood by the staff and governors.

Work to engage families more frequently in the life of the school is developing steadily. Governors have taken practical steps to gather the views of parents. Many parents volunteer as reading helpers. A new homework club encourages parents and carers to come in and work alongside their child, knowing that the support of a teacher is on hand. A breakfast club and reading café are proving popular with parents and pupils alike. Leaders continue to insist on a punctual start to the day. As a result, more pupils are arriving on time and punctuality is steadily improving.

The work of middle leaders continues to develop effectively and they are taking more responsibility for improving teaching and learning in their subjects. Action plans for subjects are detailed and middle leaders are making more regular checks to inform their work. For example, the teacher with responsibility for pupils' personal, health and social education recently held conferences with pupils to explore their understanding of British values. In one lesson observed by the inspector, pupils could confidently explain the meaning of the word citizen. In addition, pupils who are the school's 'Members of Manor Parliament' meet more regularly and are much more involved in making decisions about the school. They recently instigated improvements to the playground and outdoor space. Middle leaders need to ensure that they are evaluating the impact of their work on improving pupils' learning.

The work of the governing body is at an early stage. Governors are supportive and keen to develop their skills more fully. They have begun to undertake focused visits to the school, including attending a recent event for prospective families. Visits need to align more closely to the school improvement priorities, including improving teaching and learning. A skills audit is underway and helpful training to develop governor expertise further is planned.

External support

The local authority is steadily reducing its support of the school as the school builds its own capacity to improve. An adviser meets with the headteacher regularly, offering good challenge and advice alongside providing helpful training and support for other leaders. The support from Portswood Teaching Alliance continues to help improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Year 1. Other useful links have been forged, including with a National Leader of Education from Ludlow Infant

School. The local authority is sharing some aspects of the school's work with others, which is testament to the improvements being made.