

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 679 9153
Direct email: naik.sandhu@serco.com



27 February 2015

Deborah Bailey
Executive Headteacher
John Bunyan Junior School
Lancaster Way
Braintree
CM7 5UL

Dear Ms Bailey

Special measures monitoring inspection of John Bunyan Junior School

Following my visit with Deborah Pargeter, Associate Inspector, to your school on 25–26 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place September 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 one newly qualified teacher who will be supported by a member of staff from the linked infant school.

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 Essex.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Strengthen teaching so that pupils make good progress by ensuring that:
 - every teacher has high expectations of each pupil and uses methods that hold their attention
 - assessment data are used more effectively to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils including the more able and those who have special educational needs
 - teaching assistants are deployed so they contribute to learning throughout each lesson
 - individual targets are set for pupils in English and mathematics, and that these are frequently reviewed and used to plan the next steps in learning
 - teachers give pupils clear points on how to improve when they mark their work and check that these have been adopted.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - introducing more rigorous procedures for evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' performance and developing a coordinated approach to improving teaching
 - managing the performance of all staff more rigorously by setting individual targets for teachers which are tightly linked to pupils' progress
 - sharpening self-evaluation so that it provides a frequent and accurate analysis of performance
 - ensuring that improvement plans include challenging targets that are about raising pupils' achievement
 - undertaking an external review of the role of the governing body, to ensure that governors do more to challenge senior leaders over the school's performance.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 25–26 February 2015

Evidence

The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons and small-group teaching sessions. They scrutinised pupils' books and heard some children reading. The inspectors met with senior leaders, including leaders of mathematics, English, special educational needs and pupil premium provision. They met with two members of the strategic intervention board, including the Chair of the Board, which is overseeing the school. The inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and during two meetings. They scrutinised documents, including achievement data and monitoring records.

Context

Since the previous inspection, one teacher has left the school and one teacher has started maternity leave. The school has appointed two new teachers. The planned closure of this school and extension of the age range of John Bunyan Infant School has been delayed until January 2016. Several leaders from the linked infant school continue to support teaching and learning and are fulfilling leadership roles at John Bunyan Junior School, these include leaders of special educational needs provision, mathematics and English. The School Business Manager will leave the school at the end of February 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Progress in reading, writing and mathematics has improved in almost all classes because of successful training for teachers in whole-school approaches to teaching and learning. The slow progress of Year 3 pupils has been addressed and is improving because pupils have additional support to help them catch up. Additionally, teaching in Year 3 has improved because of the training and support teachers have received. In a small minority of classes, where weak teaching remains, progress and attainment have not improved significantly.

Teachers' assessments of pupils are more consistently accurate now. Year 6 pupils are on track to make better progress than in previous years and the proportion of pupils on track to attain Level 4 is much closer to average. However, too few pupils are on track to achieve the higher Level 5 in reading, writing or mathematics. Some of the most-able pupils in Year 6 have additional small-group lessons with a mathematics teacher from a local secondary school. Pupils enjoy these lessons and they learn new and more complex concepts. However, the impact of this additional support is limited because the learning that takes place is not shared with their class teachers. This means that, while pupils make good progress in these lessons, they do not have opportunities to practise the new skills they have learned when they return to their classrooms.

Pupils have opportunities to write more frequently in English lessons and boys are much more engaged and ready to write than in the past. Pupils' writing and the presentation of their work have improved. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their basic skills in daily 'mathematics meetings' and 'spelling attacks'. Pupils usually enjoy these short lessons and the sessions are successfully improving pupils' spelling, numeracy and mathematics skills. The spelling lessons are helpful in filling gaps in pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds letters make) and in growing pupils' vocabulary of words they can spell correctly.

Progress in reading has continued to improve. Pupils complete a broad variety of tasks that encourage pleasure in reading. The 'reciprocal reading' programme, quizzes and the new library all contribute to pupils' growing reading skills and their love of books. The routine use of fictional characters in reading lessons, such as 'Colin the clarifier' and 'Polly the Predictor', helps pupils to understand how to tackle complex questions about the books they are reading.

The gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are closing as a result of more targeted support for these pupils. Progress for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has improved because of successful support targeting pupils' specific learning needs.

Pupils' progress in science, computing, history and geography is too slow because these subjects are not taught consistently well or frequently enough. Books show that pupils' work in these subjects does not match the quality found in English and mathematics books and that these subjects are sparsely covered by teachers.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving. Training and support for teachers has been effective in improving the quality of teaching in most classes. However, the weaker teaching that persists in a small minority of classes is not improving quickly. Some lessons do not promote good learning when teachers' subject knowledge is weak, teachers do not use their assessments to build on pupils' skills and the intended learning outcome of lessons is not clear.

All teachers have useful support and training through the lesson studies, which are now widespread. Lesson studies provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their teaching and to share good practice with a senior leader or a consultant from the local teaching school's alliance. As a result of this work, some promising whole-school approaches have been introduced. For instance, teachers now routinely encourage pupils to choose their learning tasks from a range of increasingly challenging activities. This new approach encourages pupils to challenge themselves. Pupils are becoming more independent and tenacious in their learning. However, this work is at early stage in some classes and the full impact on raising levels of attainment is yet to be seen.

Teachers' marking has improved and their comments are frequently more helpful. Most pupils respond to teachers' feedback and improve their work accordingly. In a small minority of classes, and in some subjects such as science, history and geography, work is not marked well enough and pupils do not receive the written feedback they need to help them improve.

Teaching assistants help to improve outcomes, often for the least-able pupils. They regularly teach in small groups, using appropriate support programmes. During these sessions, pupils often make good progress when teaching assistants adapt their teaching to meet the specific learning needs of individuals.

The school provides some activities to motivate pupils and bring the curriculum to life. During the inspection, pupils worked enthusiastically with a theatre group in Shakespeare workshops. However, the teaching of science, computing and the foundation subjects is weak. These subjects are taught infrequently and the work in books and on display around the school is limited, sometimes poorly presented and generally not marked.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour around the school is generally good and pupils are welcoming, polite, friendly and confident to talk about the school and their work. They know the school's expectations and try to meet them. They can describe the sanctions and rewards, and believe them to be fair. Pupils say they feel safe and that bullying rarely happens; in the school's own survey, most parents agree. The worry box encourages pupils to pass on their concerns to the headteacher, who responds appropriately. Pupils have confidence that their concerns will be addressed by adults.

Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy the autonomy they have in selecting activities in lessons. Pupils recognise that there is low-level disruption in some lessons. They link this directly to how motivating lessons are. In a small minority of lessons, teaching does not engage the learners well. They daydream, fidget and chat, and their progress slows. Pupils' attendance has improved but remains below average.

When accidents and incidents occur, adults usually record them in school logs. However, these records are not checked by leaders to ensure they are completed accurately. Leaders do not monitor the behaviour and accident logs to spot trends and to make any improvements to the school's procedures to manage behaviour and prevent accidents.

Procedures to recruit new staff meet requirements. The school completes the necessary pre-employment checks and records these diligently. All staff have the

necessary child protection training, and systems to report concerns about pupils are appropriate.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The executive headteacher is continuing to drive improvements. Her self-evaluation is accurate and thorough. Key priorities for further improvements are appropriate. Teaching and learning, progress and attainment have improved in the short time since the previous monitoring visit. The executive headteacher and her team are aware that more needs to be done to improve teaching so that it is consistently effective.

Leadership of mathematics, English and of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is highly effective. These leaders track pupils' progress rigorously and intervene if they fall behind. They evaluate the impact of additional support and make changes when necessary. Teachers receive appropriate and helpful training to teach English and mathematics well. The improvement in how reading is now taught across the school is one example of this effective leadership.

Leadership of the wider curriculum is less effective, and efforts to broaden and improve the quality of teaching across the foundation subjects, science and computing have not improved matters significantly.

The leadership of pupil premium provision has developed since the last monitoring inspection. The school has begun to coordinate the range of support that disadvantaged pupils receive. Leaders do not routinely check that boys and girls do equally well, and some gender gaps in attainment have not been identified or addressed.

The executive headteacher, other senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, informed by regular monitoring of lessons, achievement data and progress in pupils' books. However, leaders are not addressing the weakest teaching with urgency and this is limiting the progress of a minority of pupils.

Governors are holding the school to account in many areas. They understand well the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a good overview of the provision for disadvantaged pupils and the impact of pupil premium funding. They are managing the forthcoming amalgamation of the two schools skilfully, and using the opportunity to introduce a staffing structure that meets the needs of the school for the future. Governors respond rapidly to recommendations for improvement, as evidenced by the progress made since the last monitoring inspection. However, they do not challenge leaders rigorously to improve the quality of teaching.

External support

The local authority has brokered helpful support, mainly through the teaching school's alliance. It monitors the progress of the school through regular visits and it has planned a teaching and learning review for March 2015. The local authority has committed to providing further support for leadership of pupil premium provision.