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2 March 2015

Mrs N Matharu
Interim Headteacher
Kings Hill Primary School
Old Park Road
Wednesbury
West Midlands
WS10 9JG

Dear Mrs Matharu

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kings Hill Primary School

Following my visit with Sheila Boyle, Additional inspector, to your school on 25 and 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013. The full list of 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 has been working in the school as a supply teacher, 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 Walsall.

Yours sincerely
Morag Kophamel
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 at least good so that pupils make good progress by making sure teachers:
 - match the level of work more closely to the pupils' ability
 - give high-quality feedback to pupils about their work and make sure they act upon this guidance
 - give clear direction to teaching assistants so they are used more effectively to support pupils' learning
 - challenge the more-able pupils, giving them more opportunities for extended writing and problem solving in mathematics in different subjects
 - teach phonics (the sounds letters make) for as long as pupils need it and make sure pupils learn correct grammar and punctuation.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by making sure leaders:
 - address pupils' underperformance by frequently checking their attainment and progress towards challenging targets and swiftly acting to address any identified concerns
 - closely check the progress of different group of pupils, especially those supported by the pupil premium, and act to ensure they do not fall further behind
 - improve the way assessment data are used by all staff, so they have a better knowledge of pupils' attainment and use this in their lesson planning
 - frequently monitor the impact of small-group work on pupils' progress, and use this information to effectively deploy resources to accelerate pupils' progress
 - ensure governors have an accurate knowledge of the achievement of different groups of pupils in the school, a better understanding of the impact of different strategies, and hold leaders to account for improving pupils' progress.

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 governance may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and other leaders. A discussion was held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors visited all classes at least once during the inspection. Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at the work in pupils' books. The school's information about pupils' attainment and progress was evaluated. Informal discussions were held with pupils, parents, carers and staff and the results of the school's pupil and staff surveys were considered. The minutes of meetings of the governing body were reviewed.

Context

As planned, the support provided to the school by leaders from the Holte federation, including the arrangements for shared interim headship, concluded at the end of the autumn term. Mrs Matharu, who was previously the local authority school improvement advisor for the school, is now the sole interim headteacher. From January, three middle leaders have interim positions as senior leaders.

Achievement of pupils at the school

As a result of improvements in teaching, more pupils are now making at least expected progress and an increasing proportion are making progress which is better than this. However, this is not yet consistent in all classes and subjects.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the majority of children are making good progress, often from low starting points. Information about children currently in the Nursery and Reception classes indicates that increased proportions are on track to reach a good level of development by the time they move to Year 1.

Evidence from the work in pupils' books, from school information about pupils' achievement and from observations in lessons, shows that pupils in Year 2 are making at least expected progress from their starting points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 who read to an inspector were keen to read and to talk about their books. They made good attempts to apply their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) when they encountered an unknown word. However, the books provided for pupils are not all suitable for pupils to practise using their phonics skills and this slows progress. The school leader responsible for the teaching of reading has raised this issue with the headteacher and governors who are aware that this must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Many pupils in Year 6 are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics but for some this is not sufficient to make up for slow progress in the past and as a result, standards, although improving, remain below average.

Rates of progress in other year groups vary from class to class and subject to subject as a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In some classes and subjects pupils' progress is too slow. For example, in some reading lessons pupils do not make good progress because the work set for them is too hard or too easy or because the tasks set do not help pupils improve their reading skills.

In mathematics, occasional weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge mean that explanations are sometimes inaccurate and this leads to errors in pupils' understanding. However, in most classes, the new approach to the teaching of mathematics adopted in the autumn term is continuing to have a positive impact on pupils' ability to recall and use addition, subtraction, multiplication and division facts. Teachers are now ensuring that pupils have increased opportunities to use and apply their mathematics in problem solving, although this is not yet embedded across the mathematics curriculum.

The quality of teaching

In an increasing number of classes, teachers are using information from their assessment of pupils' learning to plan work which builds on what pupils of different ability already know, understand and can do. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson the teacher used her knowledge of pupils' different levels of understanding and confidence to target her questioning about place value so that pupils of different ability made good progress.

Teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes are using their careful and thorough assessment of children's progress well to plan teaching and learning activities which match the needs of different children and help them to make good progress. For example, an adult supported one group of children as they worked with five (plastic) ducks in the pond, using a rhyme and careful questioning to teach one less. More-able pupils in the same class were confidently counting and working with numbers beyond 10.

The match of learning activities to pupils' ability is less successful in some reading lessons. In some Key Stage 1 classes, the activities set for pupils were too hard or too easy to allow them to make progress. For example, some pupils completed a game which involved matching words and pictures when they could already read and understand all of the words. In some classes in both Key Stages 1 and 2, activities in reading lessons were focused on developing writing and spelling skills

rather than reading skills. However, when pupils were allowed to read independently, they read with good levels of concentration and evident enjoyment.

The day-to-day assessment of reading in some classes is not well organised and lacks precision. The notes made by adults when they listen to a child read or work on a reading activity with a group are sometimes too general to be helpful in planning the correct next steps in learning. For example, some comments simply say 'read well' or 'used phonics'. The school leader responsible for the teaching of reading has identified this issue and has planned training which will take place in the next few weeks.

In mathematics lessons, teachers in Key Stage 2 give pupils frequent opportunities to revise and apply their knowledge of number facts. In most classes, this is helping pupils to accurately recall and use known facts in their calculation work. However, in some classes teachers do not check pupils' answers and so do not notice when pupils are guessing answers or copying from their classmates. Weaknesses in some teachers' mathematics subject knowledge and in the quality of their explanations mean that pupils are sometimes shown inaccurate calculation methods.

Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in the majority of lessons. They are clear about the purpose of the lesson and understand their role in helping pupils to make good progress. Most teaching assistants use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and use their good subject knowledge to explain new ideas and activities clearly and accurately. Occasionally teaching assistants do not intervene quickly enough to correct basic errors, for example, when younger children form letters incorrectly.

Pupils' work is now all marked and teachers often give pupils helpful guidance on what they have achieved and what they should do to improve their work. There are examples in some classes of teachers providing correct examples or asking a question to check understanding. However, this effective practice is not yet consistent across the school. Some basic errors, such as the incorrect use of capital letters, or the misspelling of common words, are not corrected and so persist.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well when moving around the school and at break and lunchtimes. They are polite and respectful to adults and get along well with one another. The pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe in school and are well looked after by adults. They say there is very little bullying and no racism. Pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 were able to talk confidently about how they have been taught to keep themselves safe when using the internet or mobile phones.

In lessons, the large majority of pupils listen carefully to their teachers and follow instructions promptly. They apply themselves to their work with good levels of concentration. When, very occasionally, pupils are restless or off task it is usually because teaching does not hold their interest or because activities are too hard or too easy.

Although attendance has continued to improve, it has not kept pace with improvements nationally and so is a little below the average for all schools. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced markedly and is now closer to the average nationally.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The interim headteacher and governors are rightly continuing to focus strongly on improving the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress. In order to build leadership capacity and drive the necessary improvements, the interim headteacher has worked closely with governors to build a leadership team which now includes the English and mathematics subject leaders, the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the Co-ordinator of provision for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs and another Key Stage 2 leader. The interim headteacher has provided training for these developing leaders, which is helping them to use information about pupils' achievement more effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their class. Leaders are now becoming more involved in checking on the work of teachers by visiting lessons and looking at the work in pupils' books. This is helping to build leaders' skills and confidence and to provide opportunities for them to share effective teaching strategies and challenge underperformance. Leaders have used the information they have gathered to report to governors about strengths and areas for improvement within their areas of responsibility. This is helping governors to be better informed and to evaluate the impact of school leadership.

Written feedback provided to teachers following leaders' checks on their work is now more effective in evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Records now state how and when leaders will check that the required improvements have been made.

Leaders' focus on improving the quality of teaching is having an impact and there are now more examples of effective practice in some classes. However, teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make at least expected progress. Leaders recognise that further challenge and support are required to ensure that teaching is effective across the school.

Discussions with staff, along with the outcomes of the school's recent staff survey, indicate that teachers and support staff have confidence in the interim headteacher

and other leaders, and believe that there is now greater clarity about roles and responsibilities.

School systems for recording and checking pupils' progress and attainment have been improved and now provide clear information for teachers about each pupil's starting points and the progress expected of them. The interim headteacher is in the process of making further refinements to the way that information is presented so that leaders and governors are more able to make judgements about progress and attainment in comparison to national achievement information.

The progress of disadvantaged pupils in each year group and subject is now carefully evaluated and compared with the progress of other pupils. Leaders are becoming more effective in identifying underachievement and adapting teaching or putting in place additional small-group support to help pupils make better progress. Leaders and governors know how much pupil premium funding is received and know the main ways that it is spent but are not yet able to evaluate the impact of each area of spending on pupils' achievement and well-being.

The leader responsible for co-ordinating provision for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs has further refined and improved systems for measuring and evaluating the impact of small-group interventions on pupils' progress. She uses this information effectively to plan further support for pupils. She also has a good overview of the progress that pupils with special educational needs make in different year groups and knows where further improvements are needed so that they all make at least expected progress.

There are some omissions in the school's record of the checks made on staff prior to appointment. This record is maintained by the local authority. A local authority representative confirmed to inspectors that all the appropriate checks have been made. The local authority is now updating the record to ensure that all checks are correctly recorded and dated. School leaders and governors should ensure that this is carried out as a matter of urgency.

The Chair of the Governing Body has a clear and accurate understanding of current strengths and weaknesses within teaching and of variations in the achievement of different classes and group of pupils. Minutes from recent meetings of the governing body show that governors have a strong focus on improving outcomes for pupils. Minutes also provide evidence that governors are now asking more questions to hold leaders to account for their work. Governors have benefited from training, run by the interim headteacher, to help them compare school information about pupils' achievement with national data. Governors know that they must now ensure that all statutory policies are in place and are up to date and that the school website meets the statutory requirements.

External support

The local authority has a clear and accurate understanding of the school's current position. A school improvement advisor visits the school each half term to work with the headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body to evaluate the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. This is helping to hold school leaders to account for their work.

The local authority has provided training for new governors and has also supported a member of staff with new responsibilities for safeguarding. In addition the local authority has supported the school in meeting the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The local authority is supporting governors in their efforts to appoint a new substantive headteacher. In order to ensure continuity, the local authority has agreed that Mrs Matharu will remain as interim headteacher until a new headteacher is appointed. Mrs Matharu will then work with the new headteacher to ensure a smooth transition.