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27 April 2015

Mr Bradley Taylor
Interim Headteacher
Maplewood School
Faulkner Way
High Wycombe
HP13 5HB

Dear Mr Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Maplewood School

Following my visit to your school on 24 April 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2013 and March 2014. 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 Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching to good or better by making sure that:
 - activities are well matched to individual pupils' abilities and enable teachers to make accurate assessments of pupils' progress in each lesson
 - behaviour for learning improves because all pupils are actively engaged in individually designed activities for a greater proportion of the time in lessons
 - activities are appropriately planned so all pupils make the best progress they can.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by making sure that:
 - leaders introduce robust and systematic methods for assessing pupils' levels of attainment, for setting challenging but realistic targets and for tracking pupils' progress and using this information to drive school improvement
 - regular checks of teachers' performance in the classroom are done through a comprehensive range of activities, including an evaluation of improvements in pupils' progress
 - there are opportunities for the best practice that exists in the school to be shared
 - the planning for what is taught, and when, engages pupils' interests and develops a wide range of skills, particularly in the sixth form.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 24 April 2015

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and two representatives of the local authority. The inspector spoke to a representative of Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (which has been commissioned by the local authority to provide school improvement services) on the telephone. The inspector observed seven lessons, which were all conducted jointly with senior leaders.

Context

The interim headteacher has agreed to remain in his post until at least the end of December 2015. Since the last monitoring inspection, one part-time teacher and five teaching assistants have joined the school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils are making better progress in lessons and their achievement is improving rapidly, including in subjects such as English, mathematics and science. Teachers assess pupils' learning frequently and accurately. Teachers and teaching assistants have increasingly high expectations about what pupils will achieve. Progress is more consistently strong across all classes. Leaders rightly track pupils' learning in detail.

Evidence from lesson observations, pupils' work and the school's information about pupils' achievement suggests that disadvantaged pupils and those from minority ethnic backgrounds continue to achieve as well as other pupils in the school, if not better. The achievement of more able pupils is not analysed, however.

Parents are beginning to be better informed about pupils' achievement. The school has begun to implement successful parents' evenings and informal coffee mornings, when parents can talk to teachers about their children's progress.

The quality of teaching

Pupils' achievement is improving because teaching is better now than at any time since the inspections in December 2013 and March 2014. Past inconsistencies are reducing and the best teaching is being shared effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants receive a comprehensive programme of training which is helping them to rapidly develop the right skills. In addition, leaders give teachers and teaching assistants regular, accurate and helpful feedback about what they need to do to improve, which teachers work hard to act on.

Constructive teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants in lessons is improving quickly. They know the pupils well and what pupils need to learn next. As a result, lesson plans are tightly focused on appropriate targets and tasks generally challenge pupils well. Occasionally, more able pupils are not as stretched as they could be. In the best lessons, teachers and teaching assistants question pupils effectively and pupils are given time to think and respond. Pupils are also given feedback, using appropriate and precise language.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is improving because better teaching means that they are more consistently engaged. As a result, pupils are interested in what they are learning and this is helping them to make more progress. Incidents of poor behaviour amongst pupils known to have specific behavioural issues are reducing because teachers' and teaching assistants' management of pupils' behaviour is increasingly effective.

Staff continue to care greatly for pupils and work hard to keep pupils safe. Pupils from all backgrounds mix and work together harmoniously. Pupils behave well around the school, and continue to enjoy being there.

The quality of leadership in, and management of, the school

The interim headteacher provides extremely strong and expert leadership. He is transforming the quality of teaching and, as a result, pupils' achievement has begun to improve rapidly. He has bolstered staffing levels so that pupils get the support they need.

Senior leaders now lead by example, including in their own teaching. Their monitoring of teaching is accurate and becoming increasingly effective and well established. This, along with the training that teachers and teaching assistants receive, is proving to be instrumental in making improvements. Leaders' checks on the performance of the school are thorough and accurate. Teachers are held more robustly to account for pupils' achievement.

Work has begun on developing subject leaders' effectiveness. They now have clear roles and responsibilities and are in the process of implementing subject-specific plans for improvement. However, these are in their early stages, so subject leaders' actions have yet to have any tangible impact on improving teaching or pupils' achievement.

Leaders are in the process of reviewing and developing the curriculum so that it provides more opportunities for pupils to succeed. For example, more work-related

learning, including work experience, has been introduced into the sixth form. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, therefore, is increasingly flourishing. There is more focus on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, for example through the establishment of a school council comprising pupil representatives from every year group.

Members of the interim executive board (IEB) are acting with urgency and ambition to ensure the school improves at a rapid rate. They continue, under the effective leadership of the chair, to offer the headteacher and other leaders effective challenge. They visit the school regularly to see the impact of improvements for themselves. While discussions have begun about beginning the transition to a governing body, there are, as yet, no concrete plans in place.

External support

Support from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust (on behalf of the local authority) and an external consultant has rightly begun to reduce. This reflects leaders' improved capacity to make necessary improvements themselves. However, representatives of Buckinghamshire Learning Trust still visit the school regularly to offer valuable support and to ensure the school remains on track. Recent improvements that have resulted include how data are collected and analysed, including information about pupils' behaviour. Communication with the IEB is good. Representatives from the local authority are working closely with leaders to rationalise special educational provision across the local area.