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15 May 2015

Mrs Jane Foster
Interim Headteacher
Bisham CofE Primary School
Church Lane
Bisham
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Dear Mrs Foster

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bisham CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Margaret Dickinson, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 May 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 not 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 Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for Windsor and Maidenhead and the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Alison Bradley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school so it is consistently good or better by:
 - making sure teachers' marking and feedback show pupils how to improve their work, and time is provided for pupils to make these improvements
 - ensuring teachers use information about what pupils have previously learned to plan work that challenges them and develops their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Assess accurately the skills, abilities and needs of every child when they begin the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure this information is used well to inform teaching, so that all children make the progress they should.
- Raise achievement at all key stages, particularly in writing and mathematics, by lifting teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring all statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding, health and safety, and the contents of the school's website are fully met
 - ensuring child protection plans are well organised so that leaders can check the right support is in place
 - improving record-keeping so that information about pupils is used well to help meet their needs
 - implementing rigorous systems to check on teaching and achievement, and take effective action so that these improve
 - ensuring governors undertake appropriate training to hold the school fully to account, including checks on how effectively leaders spend additional funding aimed at raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the school's leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 May 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, including safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures, and checked the safety of the school site at different times of day. They held discussions with the interim headteachers, staff, members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and representatives from the local authority and diocese. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in lessons and around school and parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day and took account of three letters from parents.

Context

The substantive headteacher has resigned. One of the original interim headteachers continues to support the full-time interim headteacher to provide additional leadership capacity. This has reduced to the equivalent of half a day per week since the last monitoring inspection. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) from her school has been working at Bisham half a day per week since the end of February. This is planned to continue to April 2016. The IEB formally took over responsibility for the governance of the school on 13 February 2015.

All four classes have been taught by supply teachers at one time or another since the last monitoring inspection, either because of vacancies or staff absence. From the end of February, vacancies in three of the four classes were covered by long-term supply teachers. These arrangements will continue in two classes until the end of the school year. A permanent teacher for the Year 5 and 6 class joined the school at Easter. A permanent Reception teacher has been appointed to take up post in September. There are 45 fewer pupils than there were at the last full inspection in September 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's information from very recent tests, and checks on what pupils understand and can do, shows there has been no notable improvement in standards this school year. Pupils' progress over time is too patchy. It is weakest in Early Years, the middle year groups and in mathematics in the older classes. The school anticipates the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in Year 6 tests in reading and writing will be higher than in 2014, but remain the same in mathematics. While these predictions compare favourably with the national picture, pupils are not achieving as well as they should, given their abilities. Too few have made the good progress needed to make up for past underachievement. As a result, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels are expected to fall slightly in writing and mathematics and significantly in reading. Hardly any are predicted to reach the higher levels in all three subjects. Standards at the end of Year 2 have

fallen, especially in writing, and, overall, are likely to be below average. No children are expected to reach the higher levels in reading or writing.

Leaders do not yet have data to show how much progress pupils have made this school year, or since the last monitoring inspection. There are no records to show how well children in Early Years are developing. It is early days, but work in pupils' books indicates that progress is starting to pick up this term in some classes. Progress is most evident in the Year 5 and 6 class, where pupils have more opportunities for writing at length. Pupils' achievement in lessons observed during the inspection was variable. Where teaching was stronger, pupils gained skills and knowledge. Where it was weak, they did not learn anything new

There is no clear pattern in the achievement of different groups of pupils. In part, this is because the collection and analysis of data are at an early stage. Leaders have started to look at the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding. There is more to be done to unpick the impact of interventions or additional support to improve these pupils' achievement and determine how well the additional funding for them is being used. The school is not yet looking at whether there are differences between the achievement of boys and girls. Nor are leaders doing enough to identify and track the progress of more able pupils.

The quality of teaching

The impact of teaching on learning is too inconsistent. The main reasons for this are that most teachers pay more attention to what pupils will do, rather than what they will learn and their expectations of pupils are not high enough. The basic skills are not always taught accurately because some teachers' subject knowledge is weak, particularly in mathematics and phonics (letters and the sounds that they make). Teachers are not questioning pupils in enough depth to check their understanding, or routinely using information about what pupils have learned in one lesson to plan the next. Assessment remains particularly weak in Early Years, although a new system for checking children's skills and abilities when they join school has been selected for use from September. In some classes, pupils are still allowed to get away with poor presentation of their work.

Teaching assistants have a limited impact on pupils' learning. Occasionally, inspectors saw them helping pupils learn by supporting and challenging them while they were working. Too often, however, they have little impact on pupils' learning. Sometimes this is because they do not explain things clearly enough or ask the right questions to help pupils understand. At other times, they simply do not provide support when they should.

It is early days, but there are some signs that, as a result of recent staff changes and training, teaching is starting to improve. Where it is getting better, teachers

have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and of their attitudes to their work. They know where pupils have gaps in their learning and plan lessons accordingly. Teachers explicitly and accurately teach new knowledge and skills and make sure pupils understand what they are learning. In the main, teachers are marking pupils work more regularly in line with the recently agreed policy. It is most effective in the Year 5 and 6 class where pupils are given time to respond to feedback in order to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils generally behave sensibly around school and at breaks and lunchtimes. They play happily together despite the fact that the equipment purchased for use outside is not always made available. Some older pupils miss playing on the climbing apparatus, but understand that they cannot do this for safety reasons.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is variable. Attitudes to learning are improving in the Year 5 and 6 class because teaching now consistently expects more of these pupils. Elsewhere in school, when pupils are not sufficiently challenged they still sometimes lose concentration and get restless. Staff turnover in the Year 1 and 2 class had a negative impact on pupils' behaviour and enthusiasm for school earlier in the year. As staffing has settled, so have pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in this class.

Attendance remains broadly average. Punctuality, however, is an issue. The expectation that pupils will arrive on time ready to start learning promptly is not yet clear enough. Too many pupils regularly arrive a few minutes late, meaning a slow or disrupted start to the day for them and their classmates.

Leaders have made clear headway in addressing most issues regarding pupils' safety and the security of the school site. The remaining few issues are in hand. A few parents expressed specific concerns about safety. Inspectors investigated these and were satisfied that leaders have taken appropriate steps to assure pupils' safety. The site has been tidied up to remove the hazards that were identified by inspectors at the last full inspection. The perimeter fencing has been replaced, where needed, and a secure fence has been erected between the early years play area and the entrance to the school. External doors are secure while allowing safe access to the outside in an emergency. Progress is being made to ensure that the school has the full range of health and safety procedures that every school must put in place. Appropriate procedures for fire and emergency evacuation, risk assessments and health and safety checks are now in place and well recorded. Sufficient staff are qualified in first aid for pupils over the age of five. Two staff are due to complete paediatric first aid training later this month.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

In the main, the weaknesses in the day-to-day management of the school inspectors identified last September have been addressed. Improvements in the quality of education have been slower. There are a number of reasons for this. Leadership of teaching and learning falls to the interim headteachers because there is not sufficient experience or expertise elsewhere in school. Until recently, they have rightly focused their energies on making sure that pupils are safe and secure. Leaders have also had to continue to spend time resolving staffing issues and parents' concerns. As a result, formal checks on teaching and achievement and performance management meetings have only started very recently. Up to Easter, most, and at times all, teachers were temporary. This, coupled with staff absence, has made it difficult to ensure all teachers got the necessary training. The situation is compounded by some staff who still do not fully accept the original inspection judgement and the need to improve their practice.

The interim headteachers have tackled the weaknesses relating to safeguarding pupils, including those who are particularly vulnerable and need protecting. Staff know who they should go to if they have any concerns about a child that may indicate they are being harmed or abused, although not all have signed to confirm that they know what the procedures are. Records for pupils with child protection plans are well organised, with actions clearly recorded and dated. All the necessary recruitment checks are carried out for any new staff joining the school.

A thorough review of which pupils have special educational needs, and what they are, has been completed and records updated. Leaders know that the next step is to ensure that teachers consistently take account of these pupils' needs when they plan lessons and that teaching assistants are clear how they can best support their learning. Leaders are aware some parents are frustrated by the time it takes to access external support.

Systems to formally monitor teaching and achievement have been introduced since Easter. Checks on teaching take account of teachers' planning and pupils' books as well as classroom observations. None of them, however, focus sufficiently on the learning that is planned or takes place. The lack of information about pupils' progress this school year means that monitoring cannot yet take account of the impact teaching has on learning over time. The interim headteacher has started to hold teachers to account for the achievement of pupils in their classes, although the targets are not yet specific enough.

The school development plan is fit for purpose now, in that it is realistic and takes account of both the points identified at the last full inspection and important issues that have arisen since. It outlines what needs to happen and sets targets for pupils' achievement at age five, seven and 11. The arrangements for monitoring the plan's progress are not clear enough to ensure there is no slippage. The plan does not separate who will be leading improvements from who will be checking that actions

have happened. It does not set out exactly when progress will be checked and what should have happened at key points. Timescales and resources are not specific enough for leaders to be sure the plan is manageable and affordable.

The IEB members are well aware of the need to ensure that the school fully meets statutory requirements and that the website is up to date. Members are finalising checks that all the policies a school is required to have are agreed and up to date. Similarly, they are checking that the new website contains all the necessary information before it is launched. The review of the use of pupil premium funding has been arranged to take place before the end of July.

The IEB members have a good understanding of their role. Meetings are regular and focused on the school's key priorities, although members are not yet formally reviewing the progress and impact of the school development plan. They have only recently received achievement figures. To date, the IEB has been too reliant on the information it receives from the headteacher. Members have not ensured that they get external validation of her judgements or that the evaluations of teaching take account of pupils' progress over time.

Parents' and carers' views of the school are divided. Just over half of those inspectors spoke to or received letters from were positive about the school. They feel the school is safer and calmer, that communication is better and that there is a greater focus on learning. The others disagree. Inspectors found that the school environment has improved since the last monitoring inspection and that there are regular newsletters containing a range of useful information. They recommended leaders check the systems for ensuring all parents receive a copy. Inspectors judged that while there are signs that teaching and learning are starting to improve, progress has been slow and needs to accelerate as a matter of priority. This will be the key focus of the next monitoring inspection.

External support

The local authority has invested significant time and resources in the school since the last monitoring inspection. Officers have provided very useful practical support to ensure that health and safety procedures and policies are in place and have provided funding for new information technology systems that are fit for purpose. Others regularly attend IEB meetings to advise and monitor the quality of governance. The local authority has also directly provided, or funded, support to help improve teaching and learning and add additional leadership capacity. As yet some of this has been too hands-on rather than providing challenge as well as support. The impact has not been monitored thoroughly enough.

The diocese has provided a useful sounding board for the interim headteacher and support in establishing systems for checking on teaching and achievement. It is essential going forward that local authority and diocese support plans are aligned and focus on teaching and, in particular, the impact it has on learning over time.