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14 May 2015

Ms Catherine Taylor
Consultant Headteacher
Kings Farm Primary School
Cedar Avenue
Gravesend
DA12 5JT

Dear Ms Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kings Farm Primary School

Following my visit with Teresa Davies, Additional 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 October 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 one newly qualified teacher into Key Stages 1 or 2 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 Kent.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils might achieve and set work that is consistently challenging, particularly for the most able pupils
 - the marking of pupils' work offers specific guidance as to how pupils can improve their performance
 - pupils have the opportunity to respond to marking
 - teachers have the skills necessary to ensure a more systematic approach to the teaching of reading
 - the work of learning support staff is closely monitored and consistently effective.

- Improve pupils' achievement, by ensuring that:
 - children enter Year 1 with appropriate knowledge and skills so they are better prepared for learning in Key Stage 1
 - pupils make accelerated progress throughout Years 1 to 6 to enable them to catch up with their peers nationally
 - the progress of disadvantaged pupils is effectively supported and closely monitored
 - pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs receive effective support which is closely monitored and enables them to make accelerated progress in line with the others.

- Improve leadership, management and governance by ensuring that:
 - sustained action is taken to enhance senior leaders' and governors' capacity to drive improvement
 - the knowledge, skills and effectiveness of middle leaders, including the leadership of provision for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, are developed
 - the school is better placed to implement the new curriculum and new assessment systems
 - procedures are in place to enable school leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact of those funds specifically designated for the support of disadvantaged pupils.

- Improve Early Years Foundation Stage provision by:
 - improving the opportunities for children to develop their basic skills in reading, writing and number
 - ensuring that all activities are purposeful and provide greater challenge, especially for the more able
 - ensuring all staff have a thorough understanding of Early Years Foundation Stage practice
 - implementing more effective assessment procedures so that staff have an accurate view of children's knowledge and skills

- increasing opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in, and knowledgeable about, their children’s learning
- improving the leadership of Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

An external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of 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 and met with the consultant headteacher, the deputy headteachers and other leaders with significant responsibilities. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Governing Body, and representatives from the local authority. They spoke informally with groups of parents and carers. Teaching and learning in 14 lessons were observed; seven were joint observations with senior staff. The inspectors also attended an assembly, looked at pupils' workbooks and heard pupils read. Aspects of safeguarding were checked.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the consultant headteacher's contract has been extended until December 2015. The interim deputy headteacher's secondment has also been extended for the same period. Governors have started a consultation to form a federation with Ifield School, a National Support School adjacent to Kings Farm School. One teacher has left the school and a new teacher has been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress is beginning to improve, although it remains variable across the school. Children in the early years are making better progress in their learning and development. The school's information shows that more children are being better prepared for Year 1. Pupils in Year 1 are developing their early reading skills appropriately. More are achieving the standards of which they are capable because work is suitably matched to their learning needs. Pupils in Year 6 are now making better progress. Improved teaching and well-planned activities are helping pupils to catch up. Pupils' progress in Years 2 to 5 is inconsistent, although work in their books shows that achievement is improving in some classes.

Across the school, gaps are narrowing between the achievements of different groups of pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils, who are now achieving standards more closely matched to those of their classmates. Pupils who have special educational needs are now making progress in line with other pupils in the school. Consequently, more pupils are working at the level expected for their ages, but there is still a lot of ground to make up for pupils in all year groups. The school's measures of pupils' progress since the beginning of the year are complicated by unreliable information about their starting points due to previously poor assessment practice. Teachers' understanding of pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are not always accurate. Improving the accuracy of assessment is a priority for staff training.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving. The quality of the learning environments has improved significantly. Classrooms are now bright, colourful and engaging spaces for pupils. Pupils' work is displayed well. High-quality displays contribute effectively to pupils' learning and include information such as how to use punctuation properly, key spellings and important facts, which are helping pupils improve their writing. The outside learning space for the early years classes has been transformed. Good quality play and learning equipment has been installed and the children are beginning to make good use of it. This is contributing well to developing their communication, reading and number skills. Pupils in all years are enjoying their learning more, helped by positive relationships between adults and pupils.

While teaching is improving, some remains inadequate. The training being provided is clearly helping teachers to develop better skills and knowledge, but there is a wide variation in the quality of teaching across the school.

Teachers have established good routines and this has helped to develop pupils' positive attitudes towards learning. Where learning is more effective, teachers plan precisely what they want pupils to learn. They explain clearly so pupils know what they should aim for. These teachers have high expectations. They set tasks according to pupils' earlier achievements so there is a good level of challenge, especially for the most able pupils. This helps them progress well. In other classes, teachers do not think carefully enough about pupils' starting points and exactly what they are expected to achieve. Some pupils find the work too easy and others do not have enough support. When this is the case, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and conscientiously. They make useful comments to help pupils progress and set new challenges for pupils to attempt. In some of the books seen, pupils respond carefully and their work has improved. Where it is less effective, marking does not link closely enough to the task or targets so does not improve pupils' learning.

At times, although teachers use questions to check pupils' knowledge, some teachers do not use pupils' responses to develop their thinking and provide further challenge through supplementary questions. Where teaching is most effective, discussions are used well to develop pupils' understanding and so pupils make rapid progress.

There is improved support to help pupils with special educational needs learn well. The special educational needs coordinator has ensured that teaching assistants have had better training. They question and support pupils more closely and play an important part in completing observational assessments in the Reception class. As a result, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is beginning to speed up.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are generally happier at school now and have become more engaged with their learning. This is reflected in their improved attendance. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and feel safe. They behave cooperatively in lessons and move around the school in a calm and orderly way. Instances of disruptive behaviour during learning are extremely rare and these are managed successfully if they do occur.

Parents and carers who spoke with the inspectors were very positive about changes made by school leaders and staff. If parents and carers had a concern, they said that they had spoken with the school and found their worries were taken seriously and resolved. Parents attending after-school homework clubs with their children found them useful and feel increasingly able to help their children learn well at home.

Pupils spoke with great enthusiasm and pride about a set of mosaics which they have created along with parents, staff and governors. The mosaics, showing the school's values and four Houses, have recently been installed at the entrance to the school. They provide an inspirational welcome to visitors and members of the school community and are part of the school's work to raise aspirations.

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

The headteacher is leading the school with determination and high levels of commitment. She shows enthusiasm in rising to the challenge of bringing about the significant improvements required and skill in managing the changes involved. She commands the confidence of the governors, the local authority, staff and parents. Both deputy headteachers, the Key Stage 1 leader, the special educational needs coordinator and family support worker are all contributing to improving the school. Leaders' plans to implement the new curriculum and assessment systems are developing well, supported by local authority advisers.

The quality of teaching and learning is checked regularly. Information from lesson observations, data about pupils' progress and work seen in books are considered carefully to make sure there is an accurate understanding of what is working well and where teaching needs to improve. Information is used to challenge underperformance and set targets for teachers, balanced with tailored support to help them improve. Actions have made a notable difference to the quality of teaching and learning in many classes. Newly qualified teachers in the school are benefitting from high quality training from school leaders and local authority officers.

The school's improvement plan has been updated to show the progress made so far. The consultant headteacher regularly checks against clear milestones whether the school is on track to meet its improvement targets. This evaluation helps governors and senior leaders measure whether sufficient progress is being made towards raising standards and improving the quality of teaching quickly enough. The consultant

headteacher knows what is improving and what more needs to be done. Governors are well aware of the improvements which have taken place and the need to raise pupils' achievement further. Governors support the formation of a federation with Ifield School in order to strengthen the effective partnership which already exists.

Following a recent external review of the use of pupil premium funding, governors have started to check how well this additional money is used to help disadvantaged pupils make better progress. Governors do not yet clearly understand the impact of pupil premium spending on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support, including regular attendance at governing body meetings. Support and challenge from local authority advisers have improved the skills of school leaders and made a positive difference to the quality teaching. Intensive support has been provided in Reception classes. The range of activities and systems for assessing children's skills have improved as a result. However, the local authority has not acted quickly enough to help the school check that teachers' judgements about standards attained are accurate.

The consultant headteacher and governors have been challenged and supported effectively to make improvements by the National Leader of Education from Ifield School. The deputy headteacher seconded from that school has helped to improve the early years provision at Kings Farm.