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15 May 2015

Ann Pratt
Headteacher
Twydall Primary School, Nursery and Children's Centre
Twydall Lane
Gillingham
ME8 6JS

Dear Mrs Pratt

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Twydall Primary School,
Nursery and Children's Centre**

Following my visit with Clive Close, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 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 up to two 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 Medway.

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Key Stage 2, so that none is inadequate and more is good, by making sure that teachers:
 - plan lessons at the right level that build on pupils' previous achievements, especially for the most able, girls and pupils eligible for the pupil premium
 - give pupils enough time in lessons to complete their work
 - provide suitable support and use appropriate resources with all pupils who have special educational needs
 - make sure that physically disabled pupils from the unit are properly included in lessons and have the specialist teaching they need to make better progress
 - provide clear information in their marking about how well pupils are doing and guidance on how they can improve.
- Raise achievement in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics, by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to apply their knowledge to investigative and problem-solving work
 - ensuring pupils with physical disabilities from the unit make better progress in the learning sessions when they are withdrawn from normal lessons.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring leaders and managers regularly check records of incidents of misbehaviour, analyse the causes, and take action to reduce them.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - at least one leader can demonstrate they have undertaken training to ensure there are rigorous procedures to recruit staff
 - teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements are accurate
 - leaders, including subject leaders, gain an accurate overview of how well all groups of pupils are doing in order to plan effective actions to improve achievement in Key Stage 2
 - leaders develop a more accurate overview of the school's work and of the impact of their actions in bringing about improvements
 - leaders seek the views of parents and carers across the school
 - governors receive training about how well pupils are doing to better hold leaders to account, and make decisions about the spending of additional funds and pay for staff.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved, and an external review of the school's use of 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 13 and 14 May 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed teaching throughout the school and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the coordinator for special educational needs (SENCO), the Reception Year leader, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body with another governor, a representative of the local authority, and a group of pupils. Inspectors talked with parents bringing their children to school, considered 76 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, and met one parent individually at their request. A range of documents was considered. This included teachers' planning for pupils' learning; information about pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour, and safety; leaders' checks on teaching and evaluation of the school's performance; governors' records; and local authority reports.

Context

The interim headteacher has now been appointed permanently to her post. Filling a range of vacancies, seven teachers joined after Easter including a full-time permanent SENCO and an experienced Nursery teacher. The school is currently advertising for permanent teachers to fill other posts, some of which are still covered by temporary teachers, and for an additional deputy headteacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement is improving in Key Stages 1 and 2, but this is not yet sufficiently consistent in all subjects or for all groups.

In Year 6, a higher proportion of pupils than in 2014 are on track to make at least the expected progress in reading, but not in writing or mathematics. In Year 2, marginally more pupils are set to achieve the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics than last year, but not enough to restore standards at the school to those achieved before last year's dip.

Year 1 pupils are set to achieve broadly the same standards in the national screening activity for phonics (letters and the sounds they make) as in 2014: still below the average national standard, and falling behind the national rate of improvement. In Reception Year, marginally more pupils than last year are ready to achieve a good level of development, but still not enough to fulfil the group's potential.

There is a mixed picture of improvement in other year groups. Achievement gaps between pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after) and others are

beginning to close, except in Year 6, where these are likely to be wider than in 2014. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school, but the most-able pupils still do not always achieve the higher levels of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching

Due to recent recruitment, and because teachers are increasingly receptive to leaders' scrutiny and guidance, some improvement in teaching is evident. Nevertheless, this improvement is not yet sufficiently established or consistent.

Some good teaching of English (including phonics) and mathematics is evident. However, not all teachers display sufficient subject knowledge to explain important underlying concepts well enough, or to extend learning effectively for the most able.

In Key Stage 1, teachers' limited expectations remain for the amount and quality of work pupils can produce without the aid of a pre-prepared sheet. As a result, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunities to consolidate or extend their learning, or to demonstrate for assessment what they have learned. In Key Stage 2, progress slows when teaching repeats learning already achieved, or pupils are unclear about the purpose of tasks, and how to know when they have achieved success.

Rightly, classroom assistants now pay fuller attention to the wider needs of the class, while still ably assisting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. There is still insufficient intervention for those who have fallen behind, but these pupils have now been identified and the new SENCO is already planning appropriate provision.

Some teachers provide increasingly thoughtful feedback, promoting good progress by identifying strengths in pupils' work and areas for improvement. However, this is not yet consistent.

Now, in the wider curriculum, teachers successfully engender a stimulating "creative learning journey", resulting for example in the breadth and quality of recent art work. Furthermore, the innovative use of coaches and specialists is promoting well, pupils' development in sport, music and information technology.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Around the school, pupils continue to behave politely and with consideration for others. The way in which pupils support and include one another, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, is exemplary. Ample supervision at social times ensures that everyone is well cared for. Providing a safe and happy start to the day, senior leaders now patrol at the gates, while support staff usher children in. The site entrance has been secured with a suitable barrier, and strenuous efforts

are being made by leaders and governors to enlist parents' support for better road safety.

When teaching demands it, most pupils are ready to work hard and aim high, including in physical education. However, when teachers still spend too long revisiting learning which is already secure, or when activities continue to lack sufficient purpose, pupils lose interest and disengage, sometimes disturbing others nearby. Pupils told inspectors that they can find this frustrating. Some pupils, particularly some boys, are still not challenged well enough to acquire the habits of a good learner, such as listening well, persisting, or working at a good pace.

In the Nursery class, recent improvements to provision mean that children now select meaningful activities inside and outside that support their development effectively across all the areas of learning. This includes boys, whom inspectors saw focusing successfully for extended periods, accomplishing what they wanted to achieve in their chosen activities, before moving on.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new headteacher provides dynamic, determined leadership, taking appropriately firm action to bring about positive change. New teachers have been promptly inducted, and given clear expectations for their performance. A well-considered staffing review has led to improving leadership of teaching and special educational needs provision, and sensible plans for further recruitment (including of an additional deputy headteacher).

Leadership capacity within the school has been significantly increased by the recent allocation of subject responsibilities, including phonics, to suitable teachers. The enhanced roles of the deputy headteacher and recently promoted assistant headteacher are now securely established. These senior leaders are working increasingly closely with the new SENCO, reviewing pupils' progress and speaking directly with teachers about how this can be accelerated. However, while promising, these developments are recent, and not yet having sufficient impact on pupils' achievement.

Helpfully, leaders are updating the school's systems for assessing pupils' achievement, and taking steps to ensure accurate checks on children's capabilities when they join the school. Many pupils enter the school with levels of learning typical for their age or better. This is not yet fully appreciated by all staff, undermining the ambition of some for pupils' achievement, especially the most able. The recent appointments of a leader to promote good provision for the most-able pupils and another to "champion" girls' mathematical achievement are therefore sensible.

Senior leaders have continued to check teaching, but necessary staff changes have interrupted the continuity of this work. Teachers show increasing readiness to discuss their practice and express enthusiasm for the training they now receive. Nevertheless, the need to take urgent action across a wide range of strategic priorities has diverted senior leaders from working adequately with individual teachers, to improve identified areas of weakness.

The wider curriculum is being developed well, and the school environment richly enhanced with fresh displays of pupils' improving art work. Parents value this, and are rightly confident about the capability of senior leaders and the increasingly positive atmosphere in the school. Parents are reassured by the visible presence of leaders in the mornings and by the recently introduced, clear complaints policy. As a result, the number of concerns shared by parents has reduced, and any queries are dealt with more promptly and appropriately, including by class teachers.

Governors have improved the efficiency of meetings, and the frequency and usefulness of their visits to the school. The governing body continues to consider academy status, now keeping parents well informed through governor-mail, newsletters and the school website. Governors are increasingly knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Recent training has equipped them better to understand information provided by leaders, and data comparing the school's performance with national standards. Since January, governors have willingly increased the pace and amount of their work to ensure timely recruitment of staff, and proper consideration of the headteacher's proposals for a significant number of appropriate changes.

External support

Leaders and governors rightly value the support and challenge of the local authority "school challenge and improvement leader" (SCIL). Through regular visits, the SCIL has provided relevant, well-focused support and challenge for senior leaders and governors, including checking planned improvements and providing training for staff and governors. The SCIL helpfully brokered the support of a consultant headteacher from a local good school, but insufficient focus on improving teaching undermined the impact of this arrangement, and sensibly, a different approach is being considered. Local authority early years consultants have provided helpful guidance to Reception staff, accompanying them on valuable visits to see good provision in other schools. Appropriately, a comprehensive review of early years provision has been agreed.