

13 November 2015

Mr Lee Regan
Interim Executive Headteacher
Peasenhall Primary School
Hackney Road
Peasenhall
Saxmundham
Suffolk
IP17 2HS

Dear Mr Regan

Special measures monitoring inspection of Peasenhall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22–23 October 2015 with Ruth Brock, HMI, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2015. 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the interim executive board and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2015

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that regular, effective checks are made on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - providing appropriate training and support for all members of staff, including teaching assistants
 - ensuring that pupils are taught a broad and balanced curriculum
 - providing governors with accurate and comprehensive information about the school's performance and effectiveness.

- Improve teaching and achievement by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with challenging work
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information to plan work that meets pupils' needs
 - ensuring that phonics is taught effectively
 - ensuring that teachers regularly provide good feedback to pupils to help them to improve their work
 - improving the quality of pupils' writing, both in English and in other subjects
 - ensuring that teachers demonstrate high expectations about how pupils should present their work
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to solve problems.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 22–23 October 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim executive headteacher, other members of staff, the pupils in Key Stage 2, a member of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative of the local authority. I observed teaching in both classrooms and looked at the work in pupils' exercise books. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

The substantive executive headteacher retired at the end of the summer term and an interim executive headteacher is now in post. A member of staff from another school in the federation was appointed as the school's senior teacher but is currently absent from school on a period of planned leave. The teachers of both classes are new to the school. A teaching and learning lead has been appointed for two terms to work across all four schools in the federation. The governing body was disbanded at the end of the summer term and an IEB has been in place since July 2015.

Outcomes for pupils

The very small numbers of pupils in each year group make it difficult to report on assessment information without risk of identifying individual pupils. However, the very small proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in the early years in 2015 gives cause for concern. Similarly, it is notable that no pupils achieved the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1.

The work in exercise books shows that pupils' attainment is well below age-related expectations by the time they reach Key Stage 2. This was illustrated clearly in a lesson observed during the inspection. Pupils were presented with a range of mathematical problems and were supported appropriately to tackle them. Although the problems presented an appropriate degree of challenge to many pupils, the mathematical difficulty of the questions was pitched much lower than would usually be expected for pupils of their age.

Although standards are still too low, there are very early signs that outcomes are beginning to improve. For example, pupils' exercise books are usually neat and tidy and pupils are beginning to take pride in their work. However, expectations are still not high enough and, too frequently, pupils in different year groups are given the same work to do.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Initially, the school made a slow start to addressing the weaknesses in teaching identified by the section 5 inspection in April 2015. Since September, however, there has been an increased focus on improving the quality of teaching and effective action is now being taken. Teachers for both the school's two classes have changed since the section 5 inspection took place.

There are early signs that the quality of teaching and learning is starting to improve. For example, scrutiny of pupils' exercise books shows that pupils are starting to respond to teachers' marking of their work. There is evidence that dialogue is starting to develop: teachers give pupils the next steps to improve their work and pupils respond to them. However, this is not yet fully developed. In some cases, marking comments – and pupils' responses to them – are too superficial. In other examples, marking is too lengthy and too detailed to be meaningful or helpful to very young children.

Pupils do not do as well as they could because, too frequently, the progression from year group to year group is not clear. Pupils are aware of this. In a meeting with the lead inspector, Year 6 pupils said that they would sometimes like to be taught separately from the rest of the class as they feel that they are held back by working with younger children.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' attitudes to learning are starting to improve. The school's leaders say that pupils have responded well to changes in the curriculum and to the higher expectations of staff. There is evidence that this is the case and that pupils are beginning to show greater perseverance and greater pride in their work.

However, low-level disruptive behaviour (such as fidgeting, daydreaming and moving around on the carpet) continues to affect pupils' progress, particularly in the younger class. The school's leaders say that this is improving. During the inspection, pupils behaved impeccably in an assembly led by the interim executive headteacher. His very high expectations now need to be demonstrated consistently by all staff and at all times.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim executive headteacher has had a clear impact on improving the school since he joined the federation in September. There is little evidence of any steps being taken to address the issues identified at the section 5 inspection prior to the

start of the new academic year. This is illustrated clearly by the lack of an action plan to address these issues. The interim executive headteacher has ensured that a thorough and appropriate action plan is in place to address the generic issues affecting the federation as a whole. He has also ensured that a specific action plan for Peasehall now exists.

However, although there are some strengths to the school's action plan, it is not yet fit for purpose. The plan does not adequately address all the areas for improvement identified during the section 5 inspection. It is not clear from the plan what needs to be done to address the areas for improvement, how long this will take and how progress will be monitored.

Leaders are now monitoring the quality of teaching and learning much more closely. For example, the teaching and learning lead has carried out learning walks with the school's leaders to check the quality of what is happening in classrooms. A more structured programme of staff training and support is now in place, following an audit of the individual needs of members of staff.

There have been some improvements to the curriculum taught. For example, pupils are now taught the core subjects of English and mathematics daily and a recent project on the Victorians captured pupils' interest and imagination well. However, the school's leaders are well aware that more needs to be done and developing the curriculum is the federation's planned focus for the next half term.

The governing body was disbanded at the end of the summer term and an IEB appointed. The members of the IEB have a wide range of experience of school governance, including successful tenures as chairs of governing bodies, members of school improvement boards and members of other IEBs. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of the IEB in ensuring prompt improvement and in holding the school's leaders to account.

External support

The local authority's statement of action (SOA) complies with requirements. It includes a range of suitable ways that the local authority plans to support the school. It is of concern that one of the SOA's first milestones (to ensure that the school had a 'fit for purpose' action plan in place for the start of the academic year) was not met. It is crucial that the support detailed in the plan is delivered in a timely fashion and that milestones are met in order for the school to move out of special measures within the prescribed time frame.