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29 December 2015

Mrs Helen McLaughlin
Executive Headteacher
Wath Central Primary
Fitzwilliam Street
Wath-upon-Dearne
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S63 7HG

Dear Mrs McLaughlin

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wath Central Primary

Following my visit with Geoffrey Dorrity, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 3–4 December, 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 June 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 school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and the 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 Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

Diane Reynard
Ofsted Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that the governing body carry out their statutory duty in making sure that all aspects of safeguarding meet statutory requirements, including the safer recruitment and checking of staff on their suitability to work with children
 - ensuring all staff are regularly updated and trained on how to keep pupils safe - analysing the behaviour logs so leaders can be proactive rather than reactive in attending to any unacceptable behaviour
 - ensuring governors hold the school fully to account for the actions taken to improve the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and their achievement
 - ensuring that the systems used for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching are rigorous and that teachers are clear and well supported, as to how they can improve their teaching
 - using the data management systems more effectively to quickly attend to any underachievement of the different group of pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, particularly for the most able pupils, by ensuring that:
 - questioning is used more effectively to challenge pupils to think and deepen their understanding
 - teaching assistants are used well to help pupils make the best learning they pupils' work is marked, giving clear guidance to them on the next steps needed to improve their work and that pupils are given opportunities to act on the advice.
- Improve achievement to be at least good in mathematics and English, particularly in Years 3 and 4 by:
 - getting pupils to use and apply the mathematical skills they are developing in mathematics lessons and in the other subjects they learn
 - developing pupils' writing skills so they can write competently in all subjects giving the older pupils opportunities to read more widely in a range of subjects improving pupils' comprehension skills.
- Improve pupils' behaviour, safety and attendance by:
 - ensuring robust risk assessment procedures are fully in place, that these are specific to the school and that checks are regularly carried out to ensure pupils are and can stay safe

- enabling pupils to know how to control their own behaviour around the school and to ensure that they develop respect for themselves and others, particularly in Key Stage 2
- training teaching assistants to better manage pupils' behaviour improving attendance, especially for boys and those supported by the pupil premium funding.

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

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 3–4 December 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim executive headteacher, seconded head of school, three senior leaders of learning, staff, pupils, a group of parents, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, a deputy headteacher from another local authority primary school has been seconded for one year, with effect from September 2015, as the acting head of school.

The substantive deputy headteacher is absent with long-term ill health and will not return for the remainder of the autumn term. A teacher from Key Stage 2 will leave at the end of December and their replacement will be in post from January 2015.

Outcomes for pupils

There is no doubt that senior leaders are now more secure about the progress pupils are making across the school. Assessment data presented to the inspector at the previous monitoring visit, which identified that pupils had made weak progress, have now been deemed inaccurate by the school. More recent data indicate that pupils are now making better progress. The unvalidated results of the 2015 national assessments and tests at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 largely demonstrate a marked improvement in attainment overall. For example, results of the Year 1 phonics screening highlight that pupils are now exceeding national expectations and Key Stage 2 progress data demonstrate that there are now more pupils achieving better progress than last year.

Confidence in the quality of the school's data is growing, enabling senior and middle leaders to identify where there are differences in progress of various groups of pupils. Revised data suggest that no groups of pupils are significantly disadvantaged. However, where small groups of pupils do less well than others, for example disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, leaders are aware of this and are taking appropriate actions, as identified in the school's developing excellence plan. While progress has been made in addressing these actions, there are no timeliness to reflect the urgency with which these need to be addressed.

Professional development opportunities and the drive and enthusiasm of senior leaders, including three curriculum leaders, are helping teachers to make the fundamental link between the importance of using pupil data and planning effectively. The tracking of pupil achievement now provides leaders with a more

realistic understanding of the starting points for each pupil, and enables aspirational goals to be set through which individual pupil progress can be measured. Joint planning across year groups is helping teachers to become more secure in their knowledge of what expected progress looks like in different subjects, but particularly in English and mathematics.

Some excellent strategies have been introduced to help support teachers secure rapid progress. For example, in mathematics, the medium-term planning for pupils' learning offers guidance notes on what teachers need to look for and what are the intended weekly pupils' outcomes, so that staff are in no doubt what a pupil's achievement should look like.

Similarly, some teachers are using afternoon registration times to work with pupils who, during the morning, struggled to grasp a particular concept. The potential impact of such strategies is clear. However, inconsistencies in the use of this approach are resulting in some pupils not making enough progress. Middle leaders and the local authority's monitoring confirm that there is still a need to engage all staff in the implementation of these strategies.

Teachers are held to account through termly pupils' progress meetings but not all have developed the skills to unpick data independently and they remain over-reliant on senior leaders. Equally, not all teachers are secure in assessing pupils' work. In-house staff training on moderation and the collation of accurately assessed pieces of pupils' work are helping teachers to develop greater confidence. This in turn helps contribute to the school's drive to secure an accurate picture of pupil progress. All in all, leaders are clear what they must do to secure good outcomes for pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching overall has improved since the last monitoring inspection and is becoming a strength of the school. However, while senior leaders are monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and can describe common areas for improvement, they have yet to tackle with sufficient urgency the small number of teachers who regularly deliver less than good learning for pupils.

In the lessons observed, learning was most effective when activities were well matched to pupils' abilities and helped build on their prior learning. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, for example, higher-achieving pupils were shown two ways of calculating equivalent fractions. They then used mathematical terminology accurately to explain to their peers how they had achieved their answers. In the same class, a small group of pupils needing additional support were reminded how to use number boards to help them calculate their answers, and were soon working independently with minimal support.

The use of questioning by teachers to elicit pupils' understanding and develop their thinking skills is largely effective across most classes and demonstrates the impact of recent targeted training for staff. Where marking and feedback are being used effectively, they reinforce what is good about pupils' work and what they need to do better. Scrutiny of pupils' books highlights some excellent examples of effective marking; however, there is too much variation across subjects.

The enquiry-based curriculum, which centres around the posing of questions rather than simply presenting facts, has been embraced and teachers are planning learning activities which are interesting and engaging. Joint planning has secured cross-curricular learning opportunities and is reinforcing the development and application of literacy and numeracy skill acquisition. For example, in the 'Is the world getting smaller?' topic, pupils learned about Scott of the Antarctic, the weight they had to carry on their backs, and the effects of suffering from vitamin deficiencies.

A group of teachers described how staff meet more regularly to plan and share ideas. They welcomed the individualised support from the leadership team and the local authority, and positively acknowledged their clear expectations, team ethic and the collaborative whole-school approach to working.

Teaching assistants know pupils well and are largely effective in helping them to behave and complete tasks in lessons. They described how they welcome the changes that the new leadership team has brought because they now have more responsibility for pupils' learning. Lessons observed reflect effective deployment of teaching assistants and where this is better, they demonstrate a good level of subject knowledge and effective questioning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Systems to manage pupils' behaviour have improved radically and this is reflected both in and outside classrooms. Movement of pupils between lessons and break times demonstrate well-rehearsed routines which ensure little time is lost to learning. This is also mirrored in lessons when pupils move from one activity to another.

The school was calm throughout the two-day inspection and low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons, when it occurred, was appropriately managed by teachers. A small number of teaching assistants are less confident in tackling pupil behaviour, which did result in some minor disruption to learning. However, teachers' prompt intervention ensured that this did not escalate.

Both staff and pupils agree that behaviour is much improved and it is clear that the introduction of the school's Central Code of Conduct and new reward system is having a positive impact around the school. Pupils confirm that they feel there has been a big improvement in school since the introduction of the new learning and behaviour rules.

The improvement in behaviour is noteworthy and recognises the appropriate steps taken by the current leaders to secure staff confidence.

Pupils describe feeling very safe in school and are confident that adults will help them if they feel worried about anything. The appointment of an additional learning mentor is ensuring that the holistic needs of individual pupils and their families are being supported.

A group of parents spoke highly of the executive headteacher, making specific reference to the way she had captured the trust of parents. One parent described how an incident with their child had been dealt with swiftly and how he had received family support from the learning mentor. They added, 'I am proud my children come here.'

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Since September the executive headteacher, the head of school and current leadership team have undoubtedly engaged the support of staff. Some staff went out of their way during the inspection to explain that while there has been an 'awful lot of change', clearer expectations and the opportunity to work as a team have ensured that the changes have been for the better.

Strong leadership and vision have brought about appropriate and much-needed direction and improvement, which were not apparent at the last two monitoring inspections.

Senior leaders, assisted by the middle leaders, have continued to implement good systems to support assessment, lesson planning and behaviour management. They acknowledge that many of the strategies are new and while there are very definite signs of improvement, more time is needed for these to have the full impact required. For instance, this is highlighted in the executive headteacher's evaluation of the quality of teaching.

Systems for tracking pupils' attainment, setting targets and monitoring progress have also been developed and are checked more rigorously by senior leaders. While this is an appropriate starting point, leaders recognise that the effectiveness of their monitoring and evaluation is still developing, as the information they gather is not being used consistently enough across all aspects of the curriculum.

There is no doubt that the leadership team is making the necessary changes and is pivotal in securing the school's renewed success. However, the fragile nature of the leadership structure where there are three out of four senior leaders either absent or seconded, calls into question the long-term sustainability of the leadership team to ensure that the school continues to improve.

The governing body continues to support senior leaders and demonstrates great faith in the current leadership structure. Governors are clear about their role and have a more accurate view of where the school has come from and what it needs to do next to continue improving. As recommended in the recent review of governance, governors believe that their new committee structure is enabling them to contribute and monitor progress more effectively. Some governors visit the school regularly and are now undertaking short visits to lessons, which are supporting their knowledge when holding leaders to account. They remain great advocates of the school and the community it serves, and express great reservations about the possibility of the school becoming an academy.

While the school is now back on track and is making reasonable improvement, it is having to compensate quickly for lost time in order to demonstrate that it does not need to be subject to special measures.

External support

The local authority's designated senior adviser continues to play a fundamental role in supporting the school and is recognised by the governing body as helping to bring about rapid change. Regular visits to the school and the brokering of additional advisory support for specific areas have demonstrated the local authority's commitment in helping Wath Central Primary to improve.