

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr Henrik Rademacher  
Dorney School  
Harcourt Close  
Dorney Reach  
Maidenhead  
Berkshire  
SL6 0DY

Dear Mr Rademacher

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Dorney School**

Following my visit to your school on 20–21 January 2016, 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 June 2015.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

### **Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

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

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2015**

- Raise achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics for the most able pupils, by ensuring all teaching is good or better by:
  - ensuring all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what all pupils can and should achieve and how quickly they should work and learn
  - setting suitably challenging tasks for all pupils, especially the most able, based on accurate assessments of their abilities and what they need to learn next
  - ensuring tasks capture pupils' interest and engage them throughout lessons
  - ensuring teachers' marking helps pupils to improve their work
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in extended pieces of work
  - providing opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems.
- Support pupils to develop more positive attitudes to learning by ensuring that they are encouraged to work harder and take pride and care in their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - establishing a clear direction and ethos for the school that encourages excellence in all areas
  - ensuring that all leaders and managers receive support to be effective in their roles
  - using the information gathered through systematic monitoring and evaluation to identify clear steps for improving provision and outcomes
  - managing teachers' performance robustly and setting challenging, but realistic, targets for improvement in the quality of teaching
  - further developing the skills and knowledge of all governors so that they hold the school to account for all areas of its work.

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.

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 20–21 January 2016**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, the inspector met with senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. Meetings were also held with two governors, the monitoring officer from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and a group of pupils. The inspector spoke to 11 parents and considered 51 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent questionnaire. A range of documents were scrutinised including the local authority's statement of action and the improvement plan. The inspector observed teaching and learning in each class and looked at work in pupils' books. Pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes was also observed.

### **Context**

The headteacher formally took up the post in September 2015. Two teachers have left since the last inspection. The early years and Key Stage 1 leader is now assistant headteacher. A new deputy headteacher started in January and is also teaching the Year 6 class. The Year 3 teacher joined the school last week. A new special educational needs leader started in January.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

There have been some improvements to pupils' outcomes. The achievement of children in early years and pupils in Year 1 improved in the summer term. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception year increased and was above the national average. Every pupil in Year 1 met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. This represents a significant increase from the previous year. The Reception teacher has high expectations of children and uses her strong subject knowledge to ensure that children achieve well. For example, in a phonics lesson, children demonstrated that they were able to write words such as 'may' and 'way' with the help of Fred the bear. The teacher used her knowledge of each child to provide precise support when they found the tasks difficult. As a result of such tailored teaching, all children in the Reception class are making good progress. Pupils currently in Year 1 are achieving standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics because their learning in the early years has prepared them well.

Reading is still a relative strength of the school. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 are currently attaining levels in reading that are expected for their age. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2015, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was similar to the national average. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and children in the Reception class

receive daily phonics and reading lessons that enable them to achieve well. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 made better progress in reading last year. The proportion of pupils making and exceeding expected progress was similar to or above that of others nationally. Nevertheless, not enough pupils currently in Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 are reaching the standards expected for their age in reading. Inconsistent and inadequate teaching has not enabled pupils to secure this essential skill as they move through Key Stage 2.

Writing and mathematics continue to be weaker subjects, particularly in Key Stage 2. Not enough pupils are achieving the standards expected for their age in these two subjects. Leaders have introduced a new curriculum for writing. Teachers have received helpful training to plan lessons that aim to enable pupils to make better progress in writing. Pupils now have regular opportunities to write at length. In Year 2 where teaching has been consistently effective, pupils' books show progress in writing, although in other classes the impact of this work is not as evident. A new curriculum is now in place for mathematics too. However, leaders have not yet focused on improving teaching in this subject.

Different groups of pupils are not achieving well. Fewer boys are reaching the expected standards for their age than girls. Pupils who have special educational needs or are disabled are not reaching the standards expected for their age because they have not received sufficient additional support. Most disadvantaged pupils (those eligible for additional government funding known as the pupil premium) are not yet achieving well. Since October, a dedicated teacher has provided weekly individual and small-group support for these pupils. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work. Leaders have not ensured that teachers routinely identify most-able pupils. Even though the progress of the most able was a concern at the last inspection, leaders have not checked the achievements of this group in relation to the expectations for their age. Therefore, it is not possible to see how well this group is achieving. Nonetheless, some most-able pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 now attend an additional mathematics 'masterclass'. Pupils enjoy these lessons. One pupil said, 'I like it because I can outsmart my parents!'

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching is improving. Staffing across the school is more stable than it was in September. Teachers are committed to securing improvements in their practice. They appreciate the additional support and training that they receive from external partners. Through regular checks on teaching and learning, the headteacher has noted that teachers are increasingly acting on this advice.

Teachers have all implemented the headteacher's 'non-negotiables' – minimum expectations for marking, introducing lessons and classrooms. At the start of each lesson, teachers now set out clearly what pupils are expected to learn. Feedback to pupils is helpful and consistent with the school's new marking policy. Pupils like the comments that teachers write because they tell them what their next target is and how to improve their spelling. Classrooms are tidy, colourful and include displays that celebrate pupils' work as well as providing useful prompts for learning.

The quality of teaching is better in some year groups than others. In these classes, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use this to help pupils to improve. For example, the Year 6 teacher taught a range of techniques that allowed all pupils to write a detailed and effective description of a setting. Some teachers are starting to provide more challenging and interesting lessons. In Year 5, pupils delighted in devising demanding questions about Norway, such as 'Is Norway known as the land of the midnight sun?' Pupils rose to the challenge and drew a plethora of facts from the detailed text that the teacher provided.

Assessment is not used well enough in most classes to support pupils' learning. During lessons, teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding and use this information to adapt the lesson so that all pupils achieve well. Most teachers do not use pupils' progress information to plan activities that match pupils' needs. Work is often too easy or too hard. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils' books show that this is particularly the case in Year 3 and Year 4. Consequently, pupils are not yet making the rapid progress that is required to make up for underachievement in the past.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils' attendance continues to be above the national average. Very few pupils are persistently absent. Leaders are closely monitoring pupils' rates of absence and taking steps to address any poor attendance. Almost all pupils are consistently punctual.

Pupils are courteous, friendly and positive about school. Teaching assistants have strong relationships with pupils and have helped them to feel more settled, particularly when they have had new teachers. Parents report that their children are happier at school, particularly since staffing has become more stable. Around the school, most pupils behave kindly towards each other. However, pupils rightly state that not everyone behaves well. Although a new behaviour policy was introduced last term, staff do not demonstrate a good enough understanding of what is expected of pupils. Staff do not always challenge misbehaviour. For example, at lunchtimes pupils often run in and out of the school building.

The headteacher has set clear guidelines for pupils about how they should present their work. Pupils are keen to receive a headteacher's award for their careful presentation and have made the necessary changes. Consequently, pupils are taking greater pride in their work. However, some pupils are not sufficiently focused on their work. Not all teachers are setting their expectations of pupils high enough and ensuring that they work as hard as possible. This slows pupils' progress further.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The headteacher and governing body have set a clear direction for the school. Staff know that they are striving for 'high expectations, aspirations and enjoyment'. Leaders rightly recognise that the school is an important part of the local community. Parents value the school and are keen to share their appreciation for the way that leaders have worked with the community so far. Parents have confidence in the new headteacher and appreciate the much improved levels of communication. The headteacher is visible to parents and pupils and has taken time to get to know them. Relationships between adults in the school are equally positive. Staff know what needs to happen if the school is going to improve.

Leaders have benefited from external support that has enabled them to become more effective in their roles. For example, the English leader has developed a clear action plan because she has worked closely with a leader from Chepping View Primary Academy. The assistant headteacher has learnt how to use children's progress information to further raise achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result of this work, both leaders are making incisive changes to teaching.

Working closely with external advisers, the headteacher has put in place some essential systems. All leaders make regular checks on teaching and learning and provide helpful feedback to teachers. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving. There is a new approach to assessment that allows teachers to check whether pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age. Leaders now meet regularly with teachers to identify pupils at risk of underachievement and plan support for them. The headteacher has implemented teachers' appraisals. However, these systems are fairly new and it is not possible to evaluate their impact.

Until recently, there were not enough leaders in place. Therefore, some important aspects of the school's work are not fully underway. A lack of leadership has meant that pupils with special educational needs or those who are disabled are not yet receiving sufficient additional support. There has been less emphasis on increasing opportunities for pupils to solve problems in mathematics as there has been no mathematics leader.

The review of the school's use of the pupil premium has taken place. The headteacher has ensured that teachers know who the disadvantaged pupils are and that they receive additional support. Nevertheless, some recommendations from the report have not been implemented because there is currently no leader responsible for disadvantaged pupils.

The review of governance was completed in September. The governing body has undertaken some of the resulting actions, such as ensuring that there are no vacancies on the governing body and providing training for governors. Governors provided some temporary leadership support for the headteacher last term. This helped the headteacher to complete some important tasks from the improvement plan. However, governors do not routinely evaluate the impact of the improvement plan. There is not a sharp enough focus on the progress made in governors' meetings or in the headteacher's reports to governors.

### **External support**

The Buckinghamshire Learning Trust's statement of action effectively matches support from external partners to the priorities for school improvement. Consequently, school leaders benefit from timely and appropriate help from Chepping View Primary Academy and the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. As leadership has been limited, Chepping View Primary Academy and the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust have provided significant support that has kept the ambitious improvement plans on track.