

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



20 October 2015

Mrs Marcia Crow
Interim Headteacher
Beechview School
Guinions Road
High Wycombe
HP13 7NT

Dear Mrs Crow

Special measures monitoring inspection of Beechview School

Following my visit with Brian Macdonald, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 23–24 September 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 again became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

The school may not appoint 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 interim executive board and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good or better by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide tasks that take full account of pupils' prior learning and have enough challenge for pupils of varying abilities
 - plan lessons which inspire pupils to learn as well as they can make regular checks to assess accurately how well pupils are learning
 - give pupils opportunities to respond to advice given in marking and feedback.

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that they:
 - have more opportunities to apply mathematical skills to problem-solving activities
 - read more regularly to adults
 - have regular opportunities to write at length and put into practice the skills they are developing
 - always record and present their work accurately and with care.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - including clear measures of success in plans, so that all leaders can more readily check the rate of improvement in teaching and learning
 - making sure that procedures for managing teachers' performance are fully effective and staff are held to account for their impact on pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that the checks that all leaders make on the quality of teaching take account of the progress pupils are making
 - broadening and deepening the curriculum so that it fully meets the needs of pupils and develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding
 - monitoring and evaluating the impact of pupil premium funding on raising pupils' attainment ensuring that governors hold leaders to account for the performance of the school.

Report on the second monitoring inspection, 23–24 September 2015

Evidence

Inspectors met with the interim headteacher, members of staff, representatives of the interim executive board and officers of the local authority. Discussions were held with pupils and inspectors heard some pupils read. They observed lessons in all classes, some jointly with the interim headteacher, and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors observed pupils at playtimes, as they moved around the school, and during an assembly. They scrutinised key documents, including school improvement planning, minutes of meetings and information about pupils' academic progress. Inspectors took account of parents' opinions from Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Context

The interim headteacher, who had just started at the school at the time of the first monitoring visit in April, continues in post. Two new permanent deputy headteachers have started work at the school. One has broad responsibility for inclusion, the other for teaching and learning. The school has recruited more permanent members of staff to its vacancies.

Outcomes for pupils

At the time of the December 2014 inspection, and the first monitoring visit in April 2015, the atmosphere in the school felt somewhat depressed and uncertain. Pupils, although keen, sensed this and it reflected in their learning. The school now feels very different. There is greater confidence and pupils feel much more buoyant. This is reflected in more positive outcomes. Inspectors noted several examples of pupils learning confidently during lessons. Their academic progress shows clear improvement. Nevertheless, there is much still to do, as the school recognises.

The results of the 2015 Year 6 national assessments in English and mathematics were, as expected, below national averages. Too few pupils reached the higher levels. Some key lessons have been learned from this information. The current Year 6 pupils have made a reasonable start this year. The school has set ambitious targets for them. The pupils are learning some key rules of literacy, such as the difference between direct and recorded speech, and how to build suspense in writing. But these different lessons are not fully integrated. There is not yet evidence that the pupils fully make sense of this disparate learning or link it all together into their writing. The quality of pupils' writing in Year 6 remains, overall, below where it should be.

Year 3 pupils have entered the school with a good set of results from their infant schools. These pupils demonstrate much potential. They have made a positive early

start at Beechview, enjoying interesting lessons across many subjects. The school knows that, over time, these pupils should do well, with sustained high expectations.

At this early stage of the year, the school has not yet monitored formally pupils' progress. The first check is planned to happen shortly. However, inspectors noted some positive indicators. For example, pupils in Year 5 achieved well in a mathematics lesson observed, thinking carefully about what they were learning. Nevertheless, pupils with disabilities or special educational needs are not doing as well as they should. The gap between the attainment of pupils entitled to the support of the pupil premium and their peers has narrowed a little but further checks are needed against the national picture for all pupils. Girls generally fare better than boys and the school is rightly looking into why this is. It is right for their school to consider what the causes of the difference may be.

Pupils are taking more care over their work, which is usually presented neatly, with titles underlined and careful spacing. However, pupils' handwriting is not consistently as well formed or tidy as it should be, especially for older pupils.

The pupils who read to inspectors showed enjoyment of their books. They were keen but, overall, their reading was not quite as good as it should be. Some, for example, struggled to sound out letters in words correctly. Another could do that but could not understand the text well enough. None were ready to become 'free readers'. The interim headteacher recognises that reading remains an area needing considerable further development. She knows that pupils do not always use phonics strategies (linking letters and sounds) well enough and that this needs to be further addressed. Reading diaries have been helpfully introduced so that pupils can read their books more readily at home and school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching has clearly improved since the inspection. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire are mainly positive about it. Lessons are generally carefully planned, with clear learning objectives. They usually include a range of timed activities, which are sensibly paced to reach set whole-class learning objectives. Teachers are calm, kind and unruffled; they explain things well to their pupils.

Teachers' expectations of pupils are rising. Occasionally, however, teachers think too much for the pupils, answering their own questions or giving ideas which the pupils could find for themselves. Across the school, assessment information is not used well enough to match the work set in lessons enough to the needs of the pupils. Too often, all pupils do much the same work which can be too easy, or slow paced, for some and occasionally too difficult for others. For example, in an English lesson, pupils enjoyed planning their writing. But there was little provision made for pupils' particular needs, which slowed their learning. There are exceptions: in a Year 5

mathematics lesson, pupils actively solved problems about handling money, with skilled support from the staff. The problems were aptly made more or less difficult depending on the needs and responses of the pupils.

Marking of pupils' work is much better. It often provides helpful pointers explaining to pupils how they could improve their work. However, teachers do not yet consistently check sufficiently that pupils follow up these comments and make the improvements. This can be wasteful of time and effort. The expectation that pupils will respond to marking needs to be quickly established. Verbal feedback by staff, during lessons, is often well focused and useful. Teachers' questioning of pupils often enables pupils to think about and explain their learning usefully.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They continue generally to behave respectfully to each other and to adults. In lessons, they listen and usually engage well. They are pleased to help each other. In a guided reading lesson, for example, pupils enjoyed their books and the interesting tasks and discussions they were set. They concentrated well for an extended period.

The pupils who met with inspectors said, with good reason, that behaviour is improving but not perfect. They agreed together that 'most of it' is good. The parents who responded to the online questionnaire are less certain of good behaviour than they are about other aspects of the school. Pupils, however, pointed out specifically that the new behaviour policy is beginning to work, making expectations much clearer. In a few cases, nevertheless, pupils' behaviour deteriorates. For example, some pupils started casting reflections of sunlight on the classroom ceiling with their whiteboards when the teacher's back was turned. A teacher curtailed a practical science lesson outdoors when pupils lost concentration. Such incidents occur when the teaching loses pace or interest for the pupils, or when the teacher is not checking carefully enough.

Pupils like playtimes. Some pupils lead outdoor games, as do the adults. This leads to secure and enjoyable play. Pupils generally move around the school sensibly and safely. In the assembly observed, pupils listened attentively and sang with enthusiasm. They were orderly when entering and leaving the hall, though there was too much whispered chatter, which proved a distraction.

Pupils' attendance in the last academic year was slightly below average. Attendance has been high so far at this very early stage of the new term. Several pupils were absent on the second day of this inspection, in order to celebrate Eid. The rate of exclusion from the school is low.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher leads with calm determination. Her wisdom and experience show through. This inspires the loyalty and support of others. Consequently, the school feels a very different, and better, place now than it was when she took over. The headteacher is shrewd in her appointment of new staff at a time of recruitment difficulties locally. Pupils have clearly noticed that the school is more settled and purposeful, and are pleased. Staff are committed to improvement and the headteacher is keen to use their expertise.

A key example of developing and using staff expertise is the successful induction of, and the start of useful work by, the two new deputy headteachers, appointed by the interim executive board. For example, the deputy headteacher responsible for teaching quality has begun thoughtfully to map out the development of mathematics skills across the school. After her accurate evaluation of some needs, she is keen to get her teeth fully into supporting staff in improving teaching and learning. The deputy headteacher responsible for inclusion has good ideas for developing the provision for pupils with special educational needs and is ready to take these ideas forward. The development of the work of these two senior members of staff is very important to the school's future and will be assessed at the next monitoring visit.

The headteacher is developing new systems suitably. Staff performance management is now organised correctly. Staff feel ready for it and the support and accountability involved. However, the proof of its success will be in the difference it makes to the practice of the staff and pupils' learning. Training for staff in safeguarding is thorough and well received. The school has carried out proper checks on all the new staff in a timely way.

The headteacher, senior staff and members of the interim executive board all know the importance of ensuring that the improvements will continue and not wither away. The school improvement plan is ambitious and a much better working document. It is well targeted and sensibly timed, leading to the improvements made. It needs further adjustment, however, to ensure that it shows more fully how all the current improvements and initiatives will be made sustainable for the longer term. During the inspection, possible ways of doing this were discussed. Her Majesty's Inspectors will look carefully at this point at the next visit.

The interim headteacher is rightly determined that pupils will enjoy a broad and rich curriculum. To this end, the interim executive board has employed staff from a nearby secondary school to teach arts subjects. Inspection evidence suggests this has started successfully. This initiative is an important example of a recent development which needs to be managed so it can be sustained. It is important, for example, that the positive experiences Year 3 pupils now have in music and dance are further built on as the pupils move up the school. The school needs to develop a

longer-term solution, so that such high-quality teaching no longer depends solely on input from other schools.

The interim executive board, albeit that it is only a few months old, provides very strong governance for the school. Members are sharp, experienced and assertive in their work, as well as supportive of the school. They make useful, clearly focused visits to the school. Members of the board ask challenging questions of senior staff, and expect clear answers, while showing their appreciation of good work done. This keeps the school on its toes and is a key part of the reason for the improvements seen. The board has a sensible committee structure and its minutes are clear and precise.

The members of the interim executive board are rightly pleased with the recent improvements in the school. They are, however, now facing a painful dilemma. They are required shortly to make a decision about the future management and legal arrangements for the school without, in their view, being free to ask necessary questions. They also feel they have not been given the information they need about the full range of options, in order to make this decision in the best interests of pupils and community. This uncertainty is unhelpful in terms of providing a secure basis for building further the school's own capacity to improve itself and for recruiting a permanent headteacher.

External support

The local authority has improved the support for the school very considerably. Working closely with the headteacher, its officers have begun to implement a well-tailored package of training and advice. This helps the staff improve their practice, without overwhelming them. Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority rewrote its action plan, which is now fully integrated with the school's strategic plan. This is effective and is bringing improvement.