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20 April 2016

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
Interim Executive Headteacher
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Dear Mr Aalders-Dunthorne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Peasenhall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 April 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The action 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 interim executive board (IEB), the regional schools commissioner 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 that 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 second monitoring inspection on 19 April 2016

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim executive headteacher and other leaders, two members of the IEB, a representative of the local authority and the pupils in Year 6. The inspector observed teaching in both classes and looked at school documents including the single central record and the school's action plan.

Context

There has been a great deal of change since the first monitoring inspection. The previous interim executive headteacher left the school in March 2016. A new interim executive headteacher joined the school on 11 April 2016. The previously appointed teaching and learning lead left the school in the autumn term. A new appointee took up the post, part time, in January 2016. The existing head of school at Yoxford Primary School, another school in the federation, became head of both schools in January 2016. The teachers in both classes are new to the school since the first monitoring inspection.

The school site was closed for a week in February 2016 following a ceiling collapse. Pupils were taught on the Yoxford site while repairs were made. The number of pupils on roll has fallen across the federation and the local authority is about to launch a consultation into the future of the schools.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The momentum that had started to build at the time of the first monitoring inspection in October 2015 has not been maintained. Leaders and the IEB have not ensured that the quality of teaching has continued to improve. Although there are some small signs of improvement since the first monitoring inspection, these are neither strong enough nor plentiful enough to indicate that effective action is being taken towards the removal of special measures.

The changes in leadership have been disruptive and unsettling for the school. The strong and systematic focus on school improvement that was apparent did not continue after the first monitoring visit. The IEB monitored the situation closely, in conjunction with the local authority, and took prompt action when necessary. The IEB has appointed the executive headteacher of the Waveney Valley Partnership as the federation's new interim executive headteacher. As he took up post just over a week ago, it is far too soon to see the impact of this appointment.

The new teaching and learning lead is an asset to the federation and it is clear that he has played a key role in ensuring a degree of stability during these turbulent times. As an ex-headteacher, he has a great deal of knowledge and experience that enable him to carry out his role effectively. The head of school has established

herself well in the role since she took up her post in January. She already knows the pupils well and has a clear view of what needs to be done in order to move the school forward.

The school's action plan has been improved since the first monitoring inspection and is now fit for purpose. However, there is still room for further improvement. Some parts of the plan are 'thin' and would benefit from greater detail in order to provide leaders with a clearer map of the school's intended journey from special measures to becoming a good or better school. Elements in the plan need to be updated to reflect changes in the school's leadership.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

There have been some improvements in the quality of teaching since the first monitoring inspection, but not enough. It is now almost a year since the section 5 inspection judged the school to require special measures and the quality of teaching overall remains inadequate. It is crucial that the school's leaders take prompt and decisive action to address the weaknesses identified.

Furthermore, now that new headship arrangements have been put in place, it is important that the teaching and learning lead's energies are once again focused entirely on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the school. For example, where teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge is not good enough, more direct action needs to be taken to address this as a matter of urgency.

The pupils in Year 6 stated clearly that they feel that the school has improved since the last monitoring inspection. They said that their work is now more interesting and challenging. The pupils said that they enjoy their weekly visit to Bramfield Primary School for a joint science lesson with other pupils from the federation's schools and they feel that they are making better progress. For example, one pupil described clearly an investigation they had carried out to prove that light travels in a straight line. The younger pupils in key stage 2 were not seen during this inspection as they were attending a science enrichment day at a local secondary school.

The quality of assessment is improving. The school's system for tracking the progress pupils make is now fully established. The head of school knows about the needs of each pupil in the school and is using assessment information increasingly effectively to monitor their progress. The federation's leaders visited an outstanding school in a neighbouring authority to look at their assessment practices. Leaders found the visit to be inspirational and they are continuing to adopt ideas and systems to improve the assessment practice at Peasehall.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Personal development, behaviour and welfare were not a focus during this inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

The work in pupils' exercise books shows that outcomes are not good enough. There is wide variation in the quality of work across the school and this is something that must be addressed straight away. In some year groups it is clear that pupils are making better progress since January, particularly in mathematics. In other year groups little progress is evident. However, overall, more pupils are now working broadly within age-related expectations than during the first monitoring inspection.

Where outcomes are weakest, pupils are given unsuitable tasks to do and teaching does not equip them with the skills they need to be successful. For example, during the inspection Year 1 pupils were required to carry out column subtraction when their knowledge of numbers and the number system is not sufficiently advanced to enable them to do so in a meaningful way.

External support

The local authority has continued to support the school well during a turbulent period. However, changes in staffing and leadership mean that the support provided has made little difference.

A sponsor has not yet been found for the school to become an academy and its future remains unclear. The IEB and the local authority met with parents in March to discuss the possibilities for the future of this school and of the others in the federation. The local authority is about to launch a consultation on the issues discussed. It is clear that the continuing uncertainty is having a detrimental effect on staff morale and on recruitment.