

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



25 May 2016

Mr Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
Interim Executive Headteacher
Yoxford Primary School
High Street
Yoxford
Saxmundham
Suffolk
IP17 3EU

Dear Mr Aalders-Dunthorne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Yoxford Primary School

Following my visit on 11–12 May 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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, 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 ensuring that:
 - robust systems are in place to monitor regularly and accurately the quality of learning and teaching, and that specific measurable actions are put in place to tackle all areas that are identified as needing to improve
 - governors are provided with accurate and clear information that allows them to review frequently the impact of planned improvements on the quality of teaching and the progress of all groups of pupils
 - the head of school, teaching staff, teaching assistants and administrative staff are all adequately trained and supported in order to fulfil their roles
 - all teachers are accountable for any practice that does not meet the national teaching standards, and that other staff are accountable once they have been adequately trained in their areas of responsibility
 - teachers understand the specific National Curriculum expectations for all subjects for each year group, and deliver lessons that meet these expectations.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - matching the content of the lesson to the ability and age of pupils within the class
 - marking work so that pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve
 - modelling high expectations for presentation in their teaching, displays and presentation of materials, and support this by making very explicit to pupils what acceptable presentation is
 - allocating teaching assistants to support the learning of different groups in the class, providing them with adequate information to help pupils learn
 - asking pupils probing and challenging questions to clarify their understanding and extend their learning.
- Improve learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - adequately training staff to meet the learning needs of reception-aged children
 - resourcing the provision to meet the areas of learning as outlined in the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - accurately assessing children's learning against the national framework, and use this assessment to plan activities that give children the opportunities to make 'next step' progress.
- Secure pupils' good attitudes and behaviour by:
 - planning and delivering lessons that are interesting and engaging
 - the clear and consistent use of praise and consequences so pupils know what is expected of them
 - supporting pupils to take pride in their achievements
 - encouraging pupils to take responsibility for the quality of their own work, and trying harder to improve.

An external review of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management can be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 11–12 May 2016

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim executive headteacher, the head of school, a member of the interim executive board (IEB), pupils in key stage 2 and a representative of the local authority. The inspector observed teaching in all classes, jointly with the head of school.

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.

A sponsor has not yet been confirmed for the school to become an academy. The local authority will shortly begin a formal consultation process on the future of the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management has improved since the last monitoring inspection. Although there have been difficulties and challenges during this period, the school's leaders have ensured that momentum has been maintained and that the school has continued to improve. This is in no small part due to the dedication and commitment of the head of school. She is now a much stronger leader, both more competent and more confident, who has kept a clear focus on the school's key priorities for improvement despite these distractions. A number of areas of the school have improved as a result of the head of school's leadership, and her impact in the early years is particularly clear.

The new teaching and learning lead has provided very good support for the head of school. As a former primary school headteacher, he has the skills and experience necessary to provide suitable in-house training and coaching to support her in developing her role. The impact of his work both with the head of school and with other members of staff is evident.

The IEB monitored the school closely throughout the period since the last monitoring inspection, 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 and he took up his post at the beginning of this term.

The new interim executive headteacher has an extremely clear vision for the school. He understands very well that time is of the essence and he has brought an increased sense of urgency to the school, taking prompt and decisive action where necessary.

The school's leaders now have a far more accurate understanding of both the quality of teaching and of pupils' outcomes. A detailed monitoring schedule is now in place covering a full range of ways of checking the quality of provision, such as lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and reviewing assessment information.

A review of the school's use of the pupil premium was due to take place shortly after the first monitoring visit. This was cancelled because the necessary information was not prepared in time. The head of school has since taken responsibility for this area and a detailed file of evidence has now been compiled. A system for monitoring and improving the effectiveness of spending of the pupil premium grant has been established and green shoots are starting to appear. The new interim executive headteacher has secured a new date and the review will now take place at the end of June.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The effectiveness of the early years has increased beyond recognition as a result of the head of school's leadership and the hard work of the early years team. The local authority adviser has worked closely with the school to improve every aspect of provision. The school's leaders have invested wisely in improving resources, and the environment is now both more attractive and better suited to the needs of very young children.

As well as the physical environment, the quality of what is offered to children in the early years has improved enormously. The local authority has provided good support to enable the school to greatly improve how it plans learning opportunities for children. Staff now plan activities well across each of the seven areas of learning and adapt planning to include children's needs and interests. Activities have a clear purpose and are interesting and challenging. As a result, the proportion of children who are on track to reach a good level of development by the end of the academic year is expected to be much higher than previously and well above the national average.

Relationships are good throughout the school, even where teaching is weaker. Pupils love their teachers and they enjoy coming to school. However, weaknesses in the quality of teaching remain. One common weakness is that teaching is frequently not explicit enough. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they could because what they are supposed to be learning is not clear enough. For example, in a phonics lesson, pupils enjoyed taking part in a number of appropriate activities that reinforced their knowledge of the relationships between letters and sounds. However, they did not make progress because the teacher did not have an explicit goal that she wanted pupils to achieve as a result of that session. Teachers need to

focus more clearly on what they want pupils to learn and then decide what the best way is to enable them to do so.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils feel safe and free from bullying. They trust the staff who work with them and state clearly that they would seek help from a teacher if they were worried about anything. However, there is some low-level disruption in lessons because teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are not always high enough and behaviour management is not consistent.

Some pupils appear to display a degree of arrogance in their interactions with adults because they have not been given clear enough boundaries. Teachers have not ensured that pupils fully understand the differences between adults and children and so some pupils appear to consider themselves to be 'big fish in a small pond'. As a result, a minority of pupils can monopolise the interactions in class, limiting the degree to which less confident pupils are able to contribute.

The school's rules have not been made clear enough to pupils and systems for rewards and sanctions are variable. As a result, valuable learning time is lost because pupils call out and lose concentration when they should be listening. The school's senior leaders are aware of this issue and have planned a review of behaviour in the near future.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' outcomes are improving and a higher proportion are now working within the standards expected for their age. Scrutiny of the work in pupils' exercise books shows that many pupils are making expected progress and some pupils are now making rapid progress. However, in some year groups there has been little improvement in the quality of teaching and, as a result, some pupils continue to make slow progress.

Since the first monitoring inspection, the school has developed its assessment monitoring system well. From a position where the school was unable to produce any useful assessment information, the head of school is now able to produce plentiful data on both attainment and progress. This information is now used well to track individual pupils' progress and to inform regular progress meetings, aimed at identifying individual issues and finding the right approach to address them.

Although assessment has improved enormously, the school is not yet satisfied with the system that it has in place. The school's leaders do not have absolute confidence in the assessment information held on the system and the accuracy of the judgements made. The school is already working with the other schools in the interim executive headteacher's consortium and the head of school is finding this very useful. Leaders are considering changing the assessment system to match that used by all other schools in the consortium. They are aware that any change must be made swiftly and efficiently and that the momentum that has built up, in terms

of the use of assessment information to raise expectations and promote good progress, must be maintained.

External support

The local authority has continued to support the school well during a turbulent period. The support provided by the early years adviser has been particularly effective. The impact of her work is clearly evident in the improvements in the early years environment, planning and the general quality of provision.

The Consortium Multi-Academy Trust has been involved with the school for a very short time but is already supporting it well. The head of school has joined the trust's teaching, learning and assessment panel and teaching assistants are scheduled to attend a consortium-wide training day in the near future on improving the quality of teaching and learning for individual pupils. It is too soon to see the impact of this work but it is clear that school staff are already feeling better supported by the collegiate approach.