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Miss Kirsteen Craig
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Dear Miss Craig

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Kingfisher School

Following my visit to your school on 2 to 3 April 2019, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2017. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the multi academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for City of Bristol. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2017.

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership by ensuring that:
 - leaders develop clear systems which all staff follow so that leaders can accurately check the progress pupils make
 - governors have the skills and knowledge to be able to hold the school's leaders to account more rigorously for the performance of all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able
 - leaders provide the training and support for subject leaders so that they have the skills to raise standards in their subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of pupils in their class to enable them to make accelerated progress
 - rapid progress is made by all groups of pupils across the school, especially the most able, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils
 - pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils receive the support they need to overcome the additional barriers they face
 - teachers' assessments of pupils' work are accurate across the curriculum and that they use this knowledge to meet pupils' learning needs
 - teachers receive training to improve the quality of their teaching to eradicate the legacy of underachievement and to manage pupils' behaviour effectively
 - teachers use and apply the school's own systems to review pupils' work and to ensure that appropriate challenges are set, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Improve outcomes for children in the early years by ensuring that:
 - teaching and learning in the Reception Year build on the solid foundation of children's achievement in the Nursery class
 - staff use assessment information to provide activities which build on children's existing skills and allow for rapid progress to be made
 - the proportion of children who achieve the expected standard at the end of the Reception class increases.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 02 April 2019 to 03 April 2019

Evidence

The lead inspector conducted visits to each class alongside the principal. The lead inspector, alongside subject leaders, scrutinised pupils' workbooks to consider how well their approach to teaching is taking root and evaluated the subsequent impact on pupils' progress.

The lead inspector scrutinised key documentation such as the school's self-evaluation framework, the school's action plan and the pupil premium strategy. The lead inspector also considered school leaders' information about pupils' progress, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. The lead inspector considered assessments of what children across the early years provision know, can do and understand at various points of the academic year to ascertain progress.

The lead inspector held meetings with the principal, the mathematics and literacy leaders, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the early years leader and the leader responsible for the pupil premium. The lead inspector also met with the designated leader for safeguarding. The lead inspector met representatives from the governing body to discuss progress made since the previous monitoring visit. Finally, the lead inspector met with representatives from the trust who have a responsibility for school improvement.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, there have been several staffing changes, particularly across the teaching staff. These staff changes will continue until the end of the current academic year. Sadly, since the previous monitoring visit, the chief executive officer (CEO) has passed away. Currently, the role of CEO is vacant, but there is a filled position of Director of Academy Improvement to help fill this void. A leader from a nearby academy in the trust is supporting leaders to secure further improvements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the previous monitoring visit, the principal, her leaders and representatives from the trust and governing body have worked effectively to bring about much-needed improvements. This newly found momentum in improvement has significantly strengthened the school's attempts to remove special measures. Leaders have raised their expectations of staff and pupils. This has resulted in a greater focus on challenging staff underperformance and securing improved progress for current pupils.

Governors have continued to increase their knowledge of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They have familiarised themselves with the school's performance and have been in a stronger position to provide challenge for school leaders. Governors admitted that 'their eyes were opened' as they embarked on this new approach, but acknowledged that this has strengthened the accuracy of their evaluations of how well the school is performing. Governors use this knowledge to challenge leaders, but also to give praise. One aspect of the governors' work that requires greater precision is their familiarity with the early years provision. As yet, they are not confident about discussing how well the provision is performing, or how well leaders' actions are improving children's progress in this part of the school.

Leaders have successfully overhauled the provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders have put in place clear systems and structures to support such pupils. Teachers are growing in confidence when setting targets for pupils with SEND and these are tightly matched to meet pupils' specific needs. Interventions are showing signs of having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Leaders regularly review pupils' progress and are holding teachers to account to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. The SENCo checks the quality of targets and reviews the progress that pupils make against these. While the quality of approach is not consistent across the school, all pupils receive timely, routine interventions to help meet their individual needs. Leaders are aware that, at times, pupils are over-reliant on staff helping them to make progress, limiting their independence.

The use of the additional pupil premium funding has improved. Leaders have worked together to consider pupils' barriers to learning and have put in place steps to overcome these. Leaders have significantly raised the profile of disadvantaged pupils across the school. Staff, at all levels, are more aware of pupils' specific needs, and provide support. Consequently, current disadvantaged pupils have made stronger progress in writing and mathematics over the academic year. However, the proportion of pupils working at expectations for their age remains low because, for too long, teaching has been too variable in quality.

The role of subject leaders has greatly improved. They make accurate evaluations of standards in their subjects and can demonstrate their impact on leading improvements. Leaders closely monitor pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, intervening effectively when standards fall short of their expectations. Leaders' sustained efforts have resulted in improved pupils' presentation in books and an improvement in activities meeting the emerging needs of pupils. As a result, pupils' progress across writing and mathematics has improved this year. Leaders plan to revise the approach to how staff teach reading, so that it replicates the success seen in writing and mathematics. However, leaders acknowledge that the biggest obstacle to pupils' progress is variable quality in teaching, learning and assessment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous monitoring visit. While inconsistencies remain, the strengths continue to gather pace. Where teaching, learning and assessment are stronger, teachers have greater expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide activities that are suitably challenging. Where teaching, learning and assessment are weakest, pupils' progress slows down because activities are not closely matched to pupils' emerging needs.

The approach to teaching specific subjects is embedding well. In most classes, teachers are familiar with leaders' approaches, and activities build on pupils' starting points. However, the pupils' progress remains variable from class to class. Pupils' books have improved in quality. There is increasing evidence of pride in presentation and improvements in the quality of handwriting. In mathematics, there is a greater balance of opportunities for pupils to develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills. However, on occasions, staff do not move pupils on to more demanding tasks when they are ready. This prevents some pupils from working at the higher standard. In writing, sequences of lessons within a unit of work have improved. Teachers use what pupils already know, can do and understand, and provide activities to build on this. Once more, the quality of this work varies greatly from class to class.

Teachers are making better use of support staff in lessons. In some classes, teachers deploy support staff with greater purpose. Support staff use effective questioning to move forward pupils' learning, and expectations are high. However, some teachers do not make best use of support staff, leading to pupils becoming passive and wasting time. In addition, particularly in phonics, support staff lack the training needed to provide pupils with further support.

The teaching of phonics is variable in quality. Teachers do not take account of what pupils already know and make poor use of resources, including in the early years. Sessions lack focus, are often slow and, for some pupils, lack challenge.

The quality of provision across the early years is too variable. Most children begin school with skills and abilities lower than those typically seen. Where the quality of provision is strongest, activities are challenging, yet inviting, and provide children with high-quality opportunities to develop their vocabulary, which is one of the school's aims. Children become more assured, sophisticated users of language and their communication improves. Staff make effective use of the role-play corner to help facilitate this. Where the quality of provision is weaker, children do not engage with activities, because tasks are not consistently engaging and lack purpose, so children do not maintain their attention and they become easily distracted. In addition, time is often wasted. There is too little urgency with regard to helping children make stronger gains in their learning. Evidence to support teachers' judgements about pupils' progress is, at times, lacking. Consequently, children's progress varies widely.

The tracking of children's progress across the early years remains underdeveloped. Leaders have too many different and complicated methods of evaluating children's progress, and this clouds their focus. As a result, they have not noticed that the proportion of children working at expectations for their age has decreased over time in many areas of the early years framework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils' attitudes have improved, and they have an increasing sense of pride in their work and how they present it. Where teaching is strongest, pupils increasingly engage in meaningful conversations about their learning and activities which spark their interest. Where teaching is weaker, questioning fails to probe pupils' understanding and pupils' participation in activities lessens. Leaders' actions have successfully reduced pupils' absence over the course of the academic year. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are absent or persistently absent is lower than national averages.

Outcomes for pupils

Current pupils' progress has improved, particularly in writing and mathematics. Reading progress is slightly lower than leaders' expectations, but an improvement on that seen in recent years. However, too few pupils are working at the expectations for their age or the higher standard. Pupils still have gaps in their knowledge due to the inconsistent quality of teaching over time.

Pupils' progress varies widely across the school, depending on which class they are in, but leaders' interventions are bringing about improvements. However, children's progress across the early years provision remains low. The proportion of children working at expectations for their age has decreased over the academic year.

External support

The relationship between leaders of the school and those responsible for school improvement across the trust has greatly improved. This new collaborative process has resulted in sustained improvements, particularly in the provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders, at all levels, have thrown their weight behind the school and this is beginning to pay off. In addition, leaders make an accurate evaluation of the school due to the precise nature of their monitoring. They are no longer over-reliant on published outcomes to validate the school's performance, which in the past proved inaccurate.