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4 October 2019

Mrs Salima Ducker
Executive Headteacher
Ranikhet Academy
Spey Road
Tilehurst
Reading
Berkshire
RG30 4ED

Dear Mrs Ducker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ranikhet Academy

Following my visit with Alan Jenner, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 September, 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 December 2018. 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 intervention board, chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of REAch2 multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Reading. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Old
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2018

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - urgent reviews are conducted to safeguarding procedures, so that records are reliable and accurate, and all potential welfare and well-being concerns are acted on promptly, appropriately and effectively
 - governors fully evaluate and monitor all safeguarding, safety risk assessment and medical recording systems in order to hold leaders to account for their actions to support the most vulnerable pupils
 - the leadership of SEND is sufficiently rigorous, and strategies are implemented to improve provision and ensure strong pupil progress
 - middle leaders are suitably skilled, so that they can support the drive for rapid improvement
 - all staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' progress
 - the multi-academy trust and governors fully evaluate the impact of additional funding on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and personal development
 - leaders improve the breadth and quality of the curriculum by ensuring that teachers' planning systematically develops pupils' knowledge and skills in science and the foundation subjects
 - relationships with parents are strengthened to restore trust in the school's work
 - the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively to increase pupils' participation in regular physical activity.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that teachers:
 - consider what pupils know and can do and provide teaching that builds on their knowledge and understanding and matches their needs
 - deploy support staff more effectively to improve pupils' outcomes, particularly those pupils with SEND
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and increase the level of challenge for the most able pupils
 - develop pupils' reasoning and problem solving in mathematics
 - promote the sequential development of reading and writing skills more effectively, particularly in key stage 2.
- Improve attendance, particularly for those pupils who are persistently absent.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 to 19 September 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other leaders, staff, parents, the vice-chair of the intervention board, the director of education for the south of England of the multi-academy trust, the associate subject leader for phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and the associate subject leader for safeguarding. The lead inspector spoke to the deputy chief executive on the telephone. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in lessons and at breaktimes, and the lead inspector met formally with a group of pupils. The inspectors visited a range of lessons throughout the inspection.

Context

The executive headteacher continues to work in the school full time to support the development of school leadership and to lead improvements to the curriculum. The school continues to receive support from associate school leaders provided by the trust. They are helping to improve teaching and learning in phonics and in English. The trust also continues to monitor that safeguarding is effective. Since the previous monitoring visit, three teachers have left the school. These have been replaced by three teachers, including two newly qualified teachers. There is a trainee teacher in the Nursery. There has been a decline in the number of pupils attending the school so leaders have reduced the number of classes in key stage 1 from four to three.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

Leaders have set out a new vision for the curriculum. This focuses strongly on developing pupils' vocabulary, speaking and reading skills. This is helping to improve the quality of the curriculum, especially in English. Leaders and teachers are starting to map out how they want to build pupils' knowledge over time in different subjects. The new curriculum will include all the subjects of the national curriculum, although leaders have not yet decided which modern foreign language to teach. The work to develop the wider curriculum is in its early stages. Leaders and governors recognise that more support for this work could be provided by drawing on experts from within the trust.

Leaders are continuing to improve the quality of teaching in the school. There has been strong support from the trust to help teachers plan how they deliver the curriculum. This has been particularly helpful in phonics, English and mathematics. For example, as a result of better teaching for younger pupils their handwriting and early spelling are much improved. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching throughout the school remain. Leaders know this and are working to reduce these variations. This includes through setting out stronger expectations of what teaching should look like. Staff meetings are also being used more productively to improve

teachers' skills. Plans to sharpen the monitoring of the quality of teaching and of the curriculum are in their early stages.

Leaders know that pupils do not have the knowledge they need to be ready for their next stages in learning. Leaders are helping pupils to catch up quickly to where they need to be. Last year, extra support in Year 6 helped more pupils than in the past to achieve the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This year, a similar approach is planned for current Year 6 pupils.

There are a lot of new systems that are being set up to help pupils improve their reading, writing and spelling. This year, pupils throughout the school will receive extra teaching in phonics. This is intended to help them to read and write more fluently and to spell more accurately. In addition, a purposeful reading programme has been set up. This is aimed at helping pupils to improve their comprehension skills. To help pupils to develop a love of reading, library spaces have been reorganised to make them feel more welcoming. New books have been ordered, including some in dual languages to support the reading of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The most able pupils are also receiving extra help to stretch their vocabulary and speaking skills. Leaders know that they need to monitor how effectively these systems work as they become more embedded throughout the year.

Leaders have started to evaluate the impact of their actions to improve the quality of the support for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Help from the trust and from an external review of the use of pupil premium funding has supported leaders' work well. Leaders have a much clearer understanding of the barriers to learning which these pupils face. Adults, including support staff, are becoming more adept at providing extra, precise support. A nurture group has been created to support vulnerable children to settle into their key stage 2 classes quickly. The school has also set up a range of alternative activities for vulnerable pupils. Each activity is aimed at developing a different aspect of pupils' learning and development. There are early signs of success, for example some pupils' communication skills are improving. Parents also say their children come home from school happier and more settled after these activities. However, vulnerable pupils still do not make enough progress. This is because adults are not thinking enough about pupils' different starting points when they plan how to teach the curriculum.

Leaders have worked hard and successfully to raise the profile of attendance with parents and pupils. There are now rewards for attendance and exciting clubs that run in the morning. A new attendance lead is working with families to help remove any barriers they have with getting children to come to school. As a result, pupils are coming to school more regularly than in the past. However, leaders recognise that there is more to be done to reduce persistent absence as absence is still too high. They have done some careful thinking about how to help parents. For example, they have thought about making sure that terms start on a Monday and end on a Friday,

so that families are not tempted to take pupils out of school for holidays during term time. These new systems and ideas need to continue to be monitored and adapted as necessary to make sure that they continue to improve pupils' attendance.

On the whole, pupils are well-behaved in lessons and there is a positive, friendly atmosphere around the school. They like taking part in the games that have been set up at lunchtime using sports premium funding. Pupils say that adults are helpful in sorting out any friendship issues and dealing with bullying. However, some pupils still worry about bullying. In some classes, there is some low-level disruption and this is not always dealt with effectively by teachers.

Leaders have successfully started to reduce the amount of serious or extreme poor behaviour. This is because they now have a better understanding of the trigger points that were causing some pupils to misbehave. The strategies which they put in place at Easter are working, as fewer pupils were excluded in the summer term.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

School leaders and governors are absolutely determined to make Ranikhet a good school. They use the school's improvement plan well to set up new systems and processes. Now that these systems have been set up, the school's plans need to be adjusted to include clearer milestones of what success will look like over time. This will help leaders to know that they are on track when they evaluate the effectiveness of the changes they make.

The senior leadership team is becoming more established over time. They are being supported well in their roles by each other and by the trust. They have established systems for monitoring and assessment and are beginning to see the positive impact of the changes they are making. School leaders are very reflective and have a lot of ideas for how to improve the school further. They are starting to recognise that they cannot change everything at once and that changes take time to fully embed. With this in mind, they are wisely looking to streamline their monitoring. This will help them see more clearly the impact over time of the changes they make.

Trustees understand their responsibility to ensure that the school improves. Trustees have made sure that the intervention board (IB) is made up of people who are well-placed to hold the school to account and support leaders with the changes they make. The trust's director of education for the south of England also meets regularly with school leaders to discuss the changes being made. The deputy chief executive officer of the trust is knowledgeable about the school and keeps trustees well informed about the improvements which the school is making.

Leaders are starting to strengthen the school's relationship with parents. They consider how they can make things easier for parents. For example, clubs are open to more than one year group so that siblings can attend together. This means fewer journeys for parents when dropping off or picking up their children. Parents are also

being invited into school to celebrate pupils' achievements. While some parents remain sceptical about the school, early signs are that there is more positivity from some parents.

Safeguarding continues to be monitored by the IB and the trust. The school's procedures are much more robust. Recruitment checks have been made on all new staff, and these are recorded correctly on the single central record. Safeguarding leaders have received useful training and advice which is enabling them to be secure and competent in their roles. They have revised the school's safeguarding policy in line with the latest government guidelines, and display a strong understanding of the potential risks that children may face in their local community. Leaders make sure that staff are vigilant through regular training and opportunities to discuss safeguarding scenarios. Leaders make sure that pupils gain an awareness of how to stay safe, including from abuse and when using the internet. They plan to improve their teaching of safety even more with a revised information and communication technology curriculum.

Most staff say that leaders are considerate of staff workload and well-being. They feel supported by leaders and know that some steps have been taken to help them manage their work. A programme of training is helping adults to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve, and to ensure a consistent approach to teaching across the school. All senior leaders now spend some time teaching. This allows them to model their expectations and also allows staff time for extra training and for planning the new curriculum.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have listened to advice given during the first monitoring inspection. They have developed a strong vision for the curriculum which prioritises improving pupils' vocabulary, speaking and reading.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The school is not drawing enough on expertise within the trust to help teachers plan how to sequence knowledge in the wider curriculum subjects.