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20 March 2020

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

Dear Mrs Ducker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ranikhet Academy

Following my visit to your school on 4–5 March 2020, 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 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 board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the 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 third monitoring inspection on 04 March 2020 to 05 March 2020

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with: the executive headteacher; the head of school and other leaders; staff; parents; the director of education for the south of England of the multi-academy trust; and the trust's local cluster subject leaders for science and history. The inspector spoke to the chair of the transition board of governors and another governor on the telephone. She also spoke with the assistant headteacher on the telephone. The inspector spoke to pupils informally in lessons and at break times. The inspector visited a range of lessons throughout the inspection. She observed leaders' monitoring of the curriculum.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, three teachers have left the school and one has begun maternity leave. Because of this, one teacher has joined the school; a teacher from within the trust is now based full-time at the school and some of the school's leaders have taken on a larger teaching load.

At the time of the last monitoring visit, one class in key stage 1 contained pupils from both Year 1 and Year 2. A further decline in the number of pupils attending the school has enabled leaders to change the structure of the classes so that Year 1 pupils are all in one class. The remaining two classes are for pupils in Year 2.

The trust continues to oversee the school's improvement. The executive headteacher continues to work closely with the school to support the development of school leadership and to lead improvements to the school. This term, the trust has removed the intervention board and replaced it with a transition board of governors. Subject leadership for foundation subjects is now spread over the local cluster of trust schools. Staff from local trust schools are working together to develop the curriculum as a whole.

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

The school is progressing well with the improvements it is making to the quality of education. The quality of teaching is much stronger. Regular training and support with curriculum planning from across the local cluster of trust schools is helping. There is more consistency across the school because staff are typically following leaders' core expectations for how to structure sequences of learning. Staff are raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve. The next stage of development is to make sure that teachers consistently plan learning using the

information they have about pupils' different starting points, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The curriculum in English is improving. Leaders' vision for developing pupils' vocabulary, speaking and reading skills is much more established. Pupils are increasingly able to use a wider range of vocabulary in their writing accurately. Where teaching is strongest, teachers know not to assume that pupils have learned everything that they should have in previous years. They adapt what they teach to fill in any gaps they find. This approach is helping to improve pupils' writing well.

Improving reading rightly remains a focus for leaders. At key stage 1, the books pupils use to practise reading match the sounds they have learned. The extra phonics teaching that older pupils throughout the school are receiving is helping to make a difference to their achievement. Pupils are developing a love of reading, including through having daily story time. Teachers have chosen a range of quality texts for pupils to read, mixing modern and classic literature and a range of genres. These often link with broader topics that pupils are studying. This keeps pupils interested and adds to their understanding. However, many pupils still have a way to go to catch up to where they should be. More work is needed to make sure that pupils' reading improves, including helping pupils to become more fluent readers by ensuring that they practise reading much more regularly.

There are stronger plans for how the broader curriculum is taught. This is starting to help leaders to achieve their aim that 'the Ranikhet child' has access to a broad body of knowledge that will help them to succeed in the world. Wisely, the school is introducing its plans step by step. New subject leaders from across the local cluster of trust schools are leading this work. Science is becoming more established, with history and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education in the early stages of development. The content of each subject has been carefully matched against the expectations of the national curriculum. Teachers are finding the help they are getting from subject leaders invaluable. They are developing their subject knowledge well. Pupils are starting to remember more about different subjects as a result.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school was typically positive at the last visit. It is even better now. Pupils appreciate the better teaching they now receive. One pupil said that their teacher 'has brought respect back into our classroom.' Pupils are not as worried about bullying as they were at the last visit. They say that teachers deal well with any pupils who fall out. There is less low-level disruption than there was, although sometimes pupils do still find it hard to concentrate. When this happens, teachers are more adept at helping them to refocus. The behaviour needs of pupils with SEND are being identified and met more securely than in the past.

Many of the strategies being used to improve attendance are working. Pupils like the praise and rewards they get for high attendance. The morning clubs are well

attended and help pupils come into school ready to learn. Pupils in the nurture provision and those with SEND attend more frequently because their needs are being better met. Approximately half the pupils in the school are attending more regularly than they did last year. However, attendance remains an issue, including absences because of unauthorised term-time holidays. Persistent absence for pupils in receipt of the pupil premium remains high.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and the trust continue to be ambitious for the pupils at the school. The intervention board of trust representatives has held the school to account using improvement plans which have been readjusted to show clearer milestones of what success looks like. This has helped leaders to make improvements, take stock of what they have achieved and to plan their next steps more clearly.

This board has now been replaced by a transition board of local governors and leaders, still overseen by the trust. There are early signs that this new form of governance will hold the school to account strongly. The trust knows it needs to make sure that training and support for new governors is in place so that they fully understand their role in driving improvement in the school. Further adjustments, to improvement planning to make information more streamlined and useful for new governors, are planned.

The trust recognises that it still needs to closely oversee the school's progress. A layer of governance above the transition board has now been set up. This will be attended by local cluster chairs of governors and some trustee officers and trustees. It will report directly to trustees.

The senior leadership team is working very effectively to improve the school. Its members have streamlined their monitoring so that they have a more secure understanding of the progress the school is making. They have used performance management processes well to hold staff to account for their work. Leaders are more strategic and reflective than previously. As a result, they have achieved much since the previous monitoring visit. In particular, teaching is improving and there is a calmer, more positive atmosphere in the school. Several parents commented that they had noticed that the school is getting better, especially in terms of communication between school and home.

Safeguarding remains leaders' top priority. Appropriate procedures and processes have become embedded throughout the school. Leaders and staff work well together to ensure they know the risks that vulnerable pupils face. They are knowledgeable about the different levels of help available and liaise well with external agencies to ensure support for pupils and their families. Impressive work to find out where pupils do and do not feel safe has led to improvements in pupils' personal development and welfare. For example, the curriculum now includes

playing and learning in the local woods and park because some pupils were too worried to go there after school.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Safeguarding procedures and practice are much stronger than in the past. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Work to help children feel and keep safe in their community is impressive.
- Leaders have paid particular consideration to staff workload and well-being. Using expertise from the trust to develop the curriculum is reducing the pressure on staff as they make improvements to the school.
- Staff are working very well together as a collegiate team. They are rightly positive about the difference they are making to pupils' achievement, well-being and safety.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Improvements have been made to overall attendance rates, but persistent absence remains high. The trust recognises that leaders need further support from the trust to improve attendance. Adjustments to the current attendance strategy are needed swiftly.
- Although much has been achieved to improve the approach to teaching phonics and reading, pupils learning to read are not reading to an adult frequently enough. This is hindering their progress, particularly in developing their fluency.