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20 June 2013

Mrs Helen Pearson
Interim Headteacher
De Bohun Primary School
Green Road
London
N14 4AD

Dear Mrs Pearson

Special measures monitoring inspection of De Bohun Primary School

Following my visit with Michael Sutherland-Harper, additional inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 June, 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 which 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 which took place in October 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which 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:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

As agreed, one newly qualified teacher may be appointed to Key Stage 2.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Enfield.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2012

- Improve the quality of teaching so that none is inadequate and most is good by:
 - establishing much higher expectations for what pupils can achieve
 - providing more challenging work, particularly for the more-able pupils
 - improving the match of work to pupils' different needs and prior attainment, particularly in the teaching of phonics (the links between sounds and letters)
 - reviewing the deployment of support staff in lessons to maximise their impact
 - increasing the pace of pupils' working so that no time is wasted in lessons
 - giving pupils more responsibility for their learning, including understanding how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
 - improving the consistency of the use of assessment in lessons and written feedback so that it is all of the same high quality seen in a few classes.

- Improve the progress made by all pupils in English and mathematics, so that it is at least in line with the national averages in both key stages, by:
 - changing the curriculum in Key Stage 1 so that it is broader and better meets pupils' needs
 - carefully checking the progress of different groups of pupils and taking action when they underachieve
 - checking that all pupils spend the right amount of learning time on each subject
 - taking steps to develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum.

- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school, including governance, by:
 - raising expectations of what teachers and pupils can achieve
 - detailed checking and assessment of the quality of teaching and learning
 - more accurate self-evaluation and more detailed and thorough improvement planning, with measurable success criteria, timelines and links to pupils' outcomes
 - more rigorous recording and scrutiny of any bullying or racist incidents
 - ensuring governors challenge leaders and managers when provision or outcomes are not good enough.

- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average, by continuing to seek ways to ensure that children attend school, including more explicit and frequent awards in school and learning from other schools that have been successful in similar contexts.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 June 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documents and met with the interim headteacher and other staff with leadership responsibilities, a group of pupils, a random sample of parents and carers as they brought their children to school, the Chair of the Governing Body and two members of the Rapid Recovery Group, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors carried out observations of teaching and learning jointly with the interim headteacher and interim deputy headteacher.

Context

There have been further staff changes since the monitoring inspection in January: the deputy headteacher left and an interim deputy headteacher was appointed for the summer term; four class teachers have left, including the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage; and an assistant headteacher joined the school at the start of the summer term. Two classes are taught by teachers on temporary contracts. Further changes of staff are anticipated in September when new staff will be joining the school, including a substantive deputy headteacher. The school continues to experience high turnover of pupils. The soft federation with Southgate School continues and the school receives support from two primary schools in Enfield that are designated National Support Schools.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' attainment is still lower than it should be for their age throughout the school. On average, they are about two terms behind where they should be but the gap is as much as a year in some classes. In Years 1 and 2, less than half the pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. There is much to catch up. The attainment of some groups of pupils in some year groups is a cause for concern: for example, pupils eligible for free school meals attain well below their peers in Year 2; and boys in Year 6 are almost two years behind the girls in writing. However, the pattern is not the same in every class, and the variations and inconsistencies are the result of huge underachievement in the past and some remaining weaknesses in teaching.

Pupils' rates of progress vary from class to class, year to year and across the three areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Generally, their progress is improving as a result of more focused teaching, but there is more to do to close the gaps in attainment. Some are picking up quickly. For example, pupils in Year 6 have made accelerated progress this year. Pupils in Year 1 are making much better progress in writing and mathematics since the school made changes to the curriculum, although progress in reading lags behind. Changes to the planning and focus for learning in

the Reception Year is providing children with more opportunities to practise the basic skills they need to get them ready for Year 1. In the lessons seen, pupils' progress related closely to the quality of teaching and, in particular, how well the teacher had provided work at the right level for pupils' different needs.

The quality of teaching

The mixed picture of teaching quality observed by inspectors was not as positive as that seen by the school's leaders or in the local authority's recent review. In some cases, teachers' nerves got the better of them and the work in pupils' books told a more positive story than the lesson. Nonetheless, some of the weaker aspects of teaching are similar to those identified in the inspection of October 2012. In particular, issues around pace, challenge and the level of work remain to some degree. Occasionally, pupils spend too long sitting, listening to the teacher, and the move from the carpet to tables to work on their own results in a loss of focus. Teachers are more aware of the levels at which their pupils are working, but the practice of using this information to plan work at different levels, although developing, is not entirely secure. Although staff have received training in teaching phonics and are generally more confident about the content and structure of sessions, the level of the activities provided is still an issue. Sometimes, opportunities to model good writing practice as part of a phonics session are missed and the whole-class teaching of phonics does not always meet pupils' needs.

Stronger teaching, generally in Key Stage 2, is characterised by clear instructions that give direction to pupils' learning, high expectations and challenging tasks. The quality of teachers' marking has improved significantly across the board and the school's agreed system is followed consistently. Pupils are often given something to follow up, which they do conscientiously. This practice helps them to know **what** they are expected to achieve, especially when it is combined with a clear explanation and a list of criteria that helps them know **how** to achieve it. Teachers manage support staff well so that there is a clear focus on pupils' learning. Support staff are well briefed and know what the pupils they support are expected to learn.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is undergoing some change and development. There is much good practice in the system for observing children's learning and recording their progress. Importantly, parents and carers are involved in the process. However, not enough use is made of the information to focus on children's learning needs. The 'spontaneous planning' in Nursery, based on children's interests, is not focused enough on the specific learning that children need to do. The approaches to planning have changed over the academic year in the Reception Year so that children are benefiting from greater focus on developing the literacy and mathematics skills they need to make the most of Year 1. Children's personal, social and emotional skills, and their physical skills, are developing well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' conduct around the school is orderly and the attitudes to learning of the oldest pupils are positive. Younger pupils are not yet taking ownership of their learning and occasionally switch off. Behaviour towards each other is friendly and pupils are polite to visitors. Incidents of misbehaviour are few and there has been one exclusion since the last monitoring inspection.

A wide range of approaches to reward those who attend regularly and to tackle the parents and carers of those that do not has met with some success. Attendance figures are improving gradually. The number of pupils who regularly miss school has reduced from 20 in the autumn term to nine in the summer term. This improvement has been achieved through rigorous monitoring by staff with support from the authority's education welfare service.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The interim headteacher sets clear and high expectations of all staff. She is rigorous, thorough and uncompromising in her efforts to improve the quality of teaching and has taken some tough decisions. Since Easter, the senior leadership team has been strengthened with the appointment of the interim deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher, who provide support for improving teaching and learning. Other layers of leadership are improving too. Phase leaders and subject leaders are starting to get to grips with their roles. They know what needs to be done because of the clarity of expectation from the interim headteacher.

Regular checks on all aspects of the school's work include lesson observations, pupils' work and information from assessing pupils' levels to give a rounded picture of the quality of provision. Staff are set targets that are balanced by support and training to improve their teaching. Leaders are taking the right actions. However, the evaluation of the impact of the actions could be tighter to help identify the next small steps for the school to take.

The system for tracking pupils' progress has developed well, and concerns over the accuracy of assessment have been reduced, with significant support and training for staff. This puts the school's leaders in a stronger position to measure the progress pupils are making from Years 1 to 6. The school does not currently operate a 'key person' system, a statutory requirement of the framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. In practice, this means that children's records of learning have not been kept up to date in the Nursery to ensure that all children receive the necessary broad range of experiences. The system in operation does not follow naturally from Nursery to Reception to help leaders know clearly the children's starting points and to track their progress over time.

Governance is improving rapidly. The review and training provided by a National Leader of Governance has helped to audit existing skills and provide training where

required. Additional members of the governing body, appointed by the local authority, have brought expertise and experience to strengthen governance. The Rapid Recovery Group, set up by the authority, brings rigour to governance and a high level of challenge to the school's leaders. Members model how to ask challenging questions, which is helping to develop the skills of other governors as well as holding the school's leaders to account for standards.

External support

The local authority provides extensive support for the school, both directly and through contacts with other schools, and a high level of challenge through reviewing the school's progress at the monthly meetings of the Rapid Recovery Group. Support for leaders at all levels is having a positive impact in helping to build the school's capacity to improve. The impact of individual support for teachers to improve their practice is more variable.