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22 November 2013

Mrs Helen Pearson
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 to your school on 20 and 21 November 2013, 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 third 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.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 third monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 November 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, as well as two members of the Rapid Recovery Group. The inspector carried out all observations of teaching and learning jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition to the areas for development identified at the inspection, she focused on the weaknesses in the Early Years Foundation Stage identified at the previous monitoring inspection.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection there have been further staff changes: the interim headteacher has been appointed to the substantive post; a new substantive deputy headteacher took up post from September; and three class teachers have joined the school, including one who is new to teaching. Two teachers will join the school in January. During the inspection one class was taught by a long-term supply teacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The mixed picture of attainment and progress, reported at the last inspection, remains. Results in tests and assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of the summer term were, as expected, significantly lower than the national figures for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6. Despite the huge amount of progress Year 6 pupils made in the last academic year, not enough of them reached the levels expected for their age. Results in mathematics and reading were lower than the previous year. Boys did less well than girls and, on average, left the school about a year behind where they should be.

The school's information on current attainment shows that many pupils have a lot of ground to make up to reach the level expected for their ages. The difference between boys and girls is evident in all year groups. However, importantly, there are signs that rates of progress are improving. Pupils' books show that they are making progress albeit from low starting points. For example, some pupils in Year 1 who started the year with very poor writing skills have made significant progress so far.

In lessons observed, the pace of learning was hampered by gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, pupils do not have quick recall of number and multiplication facts to help them make quick and efficient calculations. Writing is a particular weakness throughout the school. Although teachers focus appropriately on developing pupils' skills, especially to encourage them to use sophisticated vocabulary, weaknesses in spelling, grammar and sentence construction abound. For

example, pupils in Year 2 do not routinely use the things they learn during phonics sessions to help them spell words when they are writing. The extent to which pupils are developing literacy skills in other subjects will be a focus for the next inspection.

The quality of teaching

Issues around the pace of learning, the pitch of activities, levels of challenge and expectations of pupils' learning are still evident. However, such weaknesses are not so widespread and there were examples of lessons that were taught well. Some teachers are responding well to coaching from senior staff to improve their practice. Lesson planning is often detailed and with more evidence of teachers thinking about how tasks will be different for different groups of pupils. However, in practice the pitch of the different tasks varies and works better in some classes than in others. This is because teachers are not always absolutely clear what they expect to see in the pupils' work by the end of the lesson. Teachers' ability to adapt work during lessons in response to pupils' errors is also variable with the result that in some lessons pupils' misconceptions are not tackled quickly enough.

Without exception, teachers are working hard to follow the principles of the school's marking policy. Comments help pupils to see what they should do next and, frequently, pupils practise a skill in response to the teacher's marking. At times, however, teachers mark work to the 'success criteria' of the lesson and miss some fundamental errors in pupils' work that need to be put right.

Generally, classrooms are tidy and well organised with an atmosphere that helps to promote learning. Displays are attractive but not all include enough examples of pupils' work. The 'working walls' in some classes serve as a clear reminder of what is expected as well as a prompt for pupils who work without close adult supervision.

The organisation in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been transformed. In the Nursery, planning is much clearer with a balance of activities led by adults and those that children choose for themselves. A 'key person' system has been put in place so that each adult is responsible for overseeing the support and development of a group of children. In Reception Year, a clear focus on teaching specific literacy and mathematical skills is helping children to develop their skills. Across the phase children are calm and settled because the structures and routines of the day are clear. A new system has been introduced to assess children's skills and knowledge as they start school. It is not always clear, though, how the information from observations of children's learning are used to plan activities. Crucially, benchmarking of children's starting points is not entirely accurate which leads to an underestimation of how their skills and knowledge compare with what might be typical for their age.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A revised behaviour policy, supported by input from governors and the local authority's behaviour support service, has been written and introduced. A high number of recorded incidents towards the end of the summer term, notably in Year 6, led to some changes in practice. The introduction of play leaders and peer mentors to help pupils resolve disagreements has led to a huge reduction in the number of incidents of misbehaviour at break times. Incidents of bullying are rare and resolved quickly. There have been no exclusions since the previous monitoring inspection in June.

In lessons, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and sanctions are needed rarely. Pupils are generally responsive to activities but, at times, they are passive learners who do what is required but no more. The staff to pupil ratio in some classes is such that pupils always have support from an adult; there is a danger that pupils become too reliant on help from adults.

Attendance continues to improve with the total for last academic year being close to the national figures.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership and management of the school continue to improve. Senior leaders are now substantive in their posts and their skills and experience complement each other. They are clear about what needs to be done to improve the school and engender a sense of teamwork among staff. The three staff that lead a phase of the school show promise despite just starting out in the role. All are clear about what they need to do and about their accountability for improving the quality of provision and the pupils' achievement in the phase. The shift towards a 'can do' culture is exemplified in the improvements made by the staff team in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

In joint observations, senior staff had an accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. There is scope to tailor direct observations of teaching to target support and coaching where it is needed most and to test out the impact of specific actions. There is scope too, to involve phase leaders in observing and evaluating teaching. Given the number of staff changes, the proposal to re-launch the teaching and learning policy and to emphasise what makes a good lesson is a sensible one. However, it is important that staff are clear that good teaching is not simply based on a recipe of specific ingredients that feature in a lesson but on the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning.

The school's new action plan derives from an evaluation of the quality of provision, based on a range of methods for checking what is and is not working in the school. It is a weighty document that would benefit from the addition of an executive summary, giving a simple overview with clear targets based on improving pupils' progress and raising their attainment. At present the criteria by which leaders,

including governors, can measure the school's success are not sharply focused on pupils' outcomes.

Senior staff and class teachers meet regularly to evaluate the progress of groups and individual pupils. This thorough approach to checking pupils' progress includes devising an action plan which identifies specific pupils who need to make more progress and a list of actions that must be taken by the teacher. Alongside actions in class, the school is implementing a wide-ranging programme of support from additional staff to help pupils catch up. The impact of this programme of support on raising standards and narrowing the gaps between different groups of pupils will be a focus of the next inspection.

Minutes of meetings of the governing body show that governors ask more difficult questions of the school's leaders including around the data being presented on pupils' progress. Governors are currently reviewing the policy for visiting the school to ensure that the purpose of such visits is clear. At present, visits do not always focus on evaluating the impact of actions taken to improve provision. Monthly meetings of the Rapid Recovery Group, which includes a number of governors, challenge the school's leaders to keep up the pace of change and improvement.

External support

Support through the federation with Southgate School and links with schools in the teaching alliance continue to provide guidance and advice for individual teachers. Positive impact can be seen in some classes where teachers follow the advice and guidance and have improved their practice as a result. The advice and guidance provided to staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been well received, acted on, and are resulting in improvements to the quality of the provision. Plans to shift the focus of support to enable leaders to provide more in-house coaching and advice for teachers are well founded.