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28 March 2014

Mrs Diane Blanckley
Acting Headteacher
Oxclose Village Primary School
Brancepeth Road
Oxclose Village
Washington
Tyne and Wear
NE38 0LA

Dear Mrs Blanckley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Oxclose Village Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 March 2014, 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 January 2013. 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 Sunderland and as below.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Grieveson

Her Majesty's Inspector

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013

- Eradicate all inadequate teaching and make it all at least good by:
 - urgently raising teachers’ expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - providing training which will teach all staff effective ways of checking on how well pupils are learning during lessons
 - providing training for staff to ensure that they make accurate checks on pupils’ progress, so they are able to plan appropriately for the next steps in learning
 - ensuring that all staff mark pupils’ work regularly and give feedback about what needs to improve that is understood and followed up by pupils in all classes
 - improving teachers’ lesson planning so that it gives more scope for pupils to learn independently, including in the Reception class
 - ensuring that teachers’ planning focuses on what and how children will learn and reduces the amount of time teachers spend on complicated explanations.

- Quickly raise pupils’ achievement and attainment in mathematics by:
 - providing training for all staff to improve their subject knowledge
 - ensuring that there is a clearly understood programme of study in place to guide teachers in planning for the development of pupils’ mathematical skills as they move through the school
 - ensuring that staff use up-to-date information about pupils’ learning to plan the next steps
 - ensuring that leaders and managers check pupils’ learning in mathematics frequently so they are able to spot underachievement and take prompt remedial action.

- Ensure the safety and well-being of pupils and staff at all times by:
 - making clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the maintenance of a safe and secure working and learning environment and holding to account those responsible for tasks associated with maintaining a safe site
 - taking prompt action to ensure that repairs are made to the fabric of the building, including fixtures and fittings, and taking immediate action should defects cause or be likely to cause injury to staff or pupils.

- Improve pupils’ behaviour in lessons and raise attendance so that it is at least average by:
 - increasing the pace and challenge of learning so pupils do not become bored and disruptive
 - finding effective ways to support those pupils who are persistently absent, and their families, so that they attend school more regularly.

- Urgently improve leadership and management at all levels and governance by:
 - improving the way that the school checks its effectiveness by planning more regular and more rigorous checks on teaching and learning
 - ensuring that arrangements for the management of teachers’ performance are rigorous and hold teachers to account for the progress their pupils make
 - providing timely and effective support for all teachers to improve their skills through regular training, especially teachers who are newly qualified.
 - improving the accuracy and robustness of the data the school collects about pupils.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 27 March 2014.

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. This one-day monitoring inspection, the last before the school converts to an academy, focused primarily on teaching and achievement.

Context

The school's deputy headteacher continues in her post as acting headteacher. The external support provided by a neighbouring school ended in December 2013. There is now much less reliance on supply staff, although two teachers now job-share teaching responsibilities for a Year 2 class. The school will convert to academy status on 1 April 2014.

Achievement of pupils at the school

School performance, based on national test and assessment data, was reported on at the previous visit. Internal tracking information and evidence from pupils' workbooks shows that progress continues to gather pace. Targets are more challenging, although there remains a substantial gap between current standards and the objectives set for the end of summer term 2014 in Key Stages 1 and 2 and particularly so in writing. Nonetheless, better teaching and well-coordinated extra support is helping to close the gap for all groups of pupils. A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is helping to tackle key weaknesses in pupils' basic skills. This is bringing about improved attainment and, for pupils, a much greater enjoyment of lessons.

The school's data tracking system is proving beneficial in providing detailed information about pupils' learning and progress and is insightful in helping staff to identify both positive gains and underachievement. The impending move to an academy-wide system of assessment needs to ensure that the key elements of the existing assessment arrangements are securely retained, so that the thorough monitoring of progress can be continued.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve, but remains variable in quality. There is clear evidence now of much better teaching in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 and while there are signs of positive gains in some other classes, further key changes are still needed. Teachers are showing higher expectations of pupils' capabilities and these are translating into more appropriate lesson activities which are taking fuller account of the range of abilities in each class. Targeted work in mathematics is leading to noticeable improvements in pupils' core skills. In Year 6 for example, this is showing in pupils' increasing confidence in manipulating numbers and in demonstrating their knowledge to the rest of the class. The school's continued focus on writing is needed and, while there is evident improvement here also, much further work is still required if standards are to rise. Teachers' marking is better but is not consistently providing all pupils with the feedback they need to push their learning forward. The role of teaching assistants within lessons needs reviewing as a matter of urgency. The additional mathematics training which some received earlier in the year is clearly helping them to support pupils more effectively, but too often in lessons assistants are passive observers, offering little help to those who need it.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are responding positively to the school's higher expectations of their performance and conduct. Attitudes and commitment to their work are far stronger now than at the last inspection. Older pupils in particular show maturity and diligence in carrying out their additional duties around the school. They are particularly keen to support younger pupils and confidently talk about their school with pride. They are sure that matters are improving and that behaviour in particular is much better. They continue to feel safe and well-cared for.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Consistent and systematic monitoring by the senior team is steadily bringing about better teaching and is leading to firm challenge where practice is deficient. The use of teacher support plans and the training provided is having a direct and positive effect on teaching quality. The senior team is working effectively in keeping the school focused on tackling key priorities, most notably in the way weaknesses in teaching are being tackled and in the routine scrutiny of pupils' progress. The combination of training and the expertise offered by newer governors is resulting in much greater insight into the school's performance and is providing more searching challenge than the governing body offered previously. Governors are now well-placed to contribute strongly to academy-wide governance arrangements. Despite the significant improvements that are still needed, the acting headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body in particular have worked very hard to make the school ready for the move to academy status.

External support

Local authority input, although reduced in scale, continues to provide effective support to the school. The weekly challenge meetings in particular are contributing strongly in maintaining the focus on tackling weaknesses and bringing about an increasing pace to the improvements being made.