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22 May 2014

Miss Joanna White/Mrs Judith Hirst
Headteacher
The Edmunds Primary School
Lobwood
Worsbrough Bridge
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S70 5EP

Dear Miss White/Mrs Judith Hirst

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Edmunds Primary School

Following my visit, with Rosemary Batty, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 May 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 and for allowing Gillian Wiles, Associate HMI, to shadow the inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 appoint one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection as long as the training for the induction year is delivered by the academy sponsor.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families for Barnsley and as below.

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve teaching so none is inadequate and much more is good or better by ensuring teachers:
 - learn how to use information about pupils in their classes accurately and consistently when planning and teaching lessons so all pupils are challenged appropriately, and work better matches the needs of pupils with different levels of ability
 - have regular opportunities to observe good teaching in the school and beyond
 - make sure pupils know their targets and what they need to do to work towards them
 - provide appropriate opportunities for children in Early Years Foundation Stage to explore and develop their own ideas, especially in communication and language and literacy, both indoors and outside.

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in order that pupils make at least good achievement by:
 - ensuring all teachers fully expect pupils, including the most able, to achieve their very best and make at least good progress
 - ensuring younger pupils read daily to an adult and that teachers fully develop effective links between home and school
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to undertake practical mathematics activities, to solve problems and to use their mathematical skills in different subjects
 - making sure teaching assistants and other adults are deployed more effectively, so pupils' time in lessons is not wasted, and ensure support in lessons is helping pupils to make better progress.

- Improve behaviour so it is at least good by:
 - improving pupils' attitudes to their work so they are better involved with their learning
 - continuing the work to eradicate the very occasional incidents of racial misunderstanding
 - improving pupils' attendance still further so it is at least in line with the national average.

- Improve the impact of leadership, management and governance at all levels by:
 - developing a coherent and accountable leadership structure that enables leaders to review and evaluate their areas of responsibility, and to take charge of making improvements quickly
 - developing still further the school's data-tracking systems so assessments are taken into the classroom at all times and leaders have a better understanding of where pupils are up to in their learning
 - checking whether actions taken by the leadership have been successful
 - making sure leaders check the quality of teaching more thoroughly, and use performance management better to drive up the quality of teaching
 - making certain all governors challenge leaders effectively and therefore fulfil their roles to ensure the school is a good school
 - ensuring all governors receive the training they need so governors can be certain actions taken to improve the school are having the desired impact

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 to 21 May 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors met the two executive leaders, senior, and curriculum area, leaders. Inspectors met a group of pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed 13 part lessons, four of which were observed jointly with senior leaders, and made a number of brief visits to classrooms to look at reading and attitudes to learning. Documents provided by the school were evaluated, including the current data about pupils' attainment and progress.

Context

An assistant headteacher has been appointed internally on a 15 month fixed-term contract. Significant staffing changes and sickness absence has had an impact on Year 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage. The governing body has been replaced by an IEB. The school is expected to become an academy with St Mary's Academy Trust on 1 August 2014. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed for September 2014 as well as other key members of staff.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' overall progress is accelerating and attainment rising. Pupils recognise this. One Year 6 pupil said, 'We have made so much more progress this year. It is amazing'.

The proportion of children reaching a good level of development in Early Years Foundation Stage is increasing, although below the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the phonics screening check is also rising, although it is still below national averages. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 2 or above is lower than in 2013, but improved assessment and moderation means the data are more reliable. There have also been a number of new pupils arriving during the year who have not reached Level 2. However, more of the most able pupils are attaining Level 3. Progress in reading is considerably improved at Key Stage 2 and attainment is rising. Expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with national averages in the current Year 6.

The systems for tracking and evaluating attainment and progress are robust. Teachers prepare data for progress meetings, held with the assistant headteacher, at which teachers are held to account for the achievement of pupils in their class. As a result pupils who are underachieving receive extra help, which is starting to accelerate their progress. Teachers and leaders have a very good understanding of the performance of different groups. The performance of boys, girls and pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding) varies from class to class. In some classes, boys and pupils supported by the pupil premium are exceeding the progress made by rest of the class. In Year 6, pupils supported by the pupil premium are making similar progress to their peers in reading

but are about one term behind them in writing and mathematics. More of the most able pupils in Year 6 are attaining Level 5, particularly in reading and mathematics. Data show some pupils in Year 1, particularly those with disabilities and special educational needs, are making less progress than they should. Leaders are taking action to address this.

There has been a whole-school focus on reading. A huge number of books have been bought. Two excellent new libraries have been developed. All children read every day and the school is promoting and rewarding home reading. Pupils are very proud of their new books, which they are able to take home every day. During the inspection some Year 6 boys took books outside at lunchtime to read.

There has been less work in developing more opportunities for pupils to undertake practical mathematics activities, to solve problems and to use their mathematical skills in different subjects as a result of the focus on reading.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving both on a day-to-day basis and over time. Teachers and teaching assistants are being helped to improve through regular training and opportunities to attend courses. The impact of this training is evident in better phonics teaching and improved subject leadership. Teachers have had opportunities to observe teaching at other schools, including at Sandhill Primary School, the school led by the executive leaders. Staff from Sandhill Primary School have helped teachers at The Edmunds Primary School to develop their planning.

Teachers are beginning to provide work which means all pupils are challenged appropriately, and the work better matches the needs of pupils with different levels of ability. However, the challenge for the most able is not always sufficient. Marking is often thorough and includes targets for pupils so they know how to improve their work. However, pupils are rarely responding directly to this marking. In some circumstances pupils are beginning to use the targets set by their teachers and some pupils could explain their next steps. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson all pupils were writing a letter to the council asking for improved road safety measures. Every pupil knew exactly what they had to do and all were working hard to produce an extended, interesting and well-presented letter. Those pupils who needed extra help were encouraged by a teaching assistant who prompted them with effective questioning and provided helpful spellings. The work of teaching assistants and other adults in the classroom to help pupils to access their learning is better. This is particularly strong in the case of phonics teaching. However, these improvements are not consistent and in some lessons teaching assistants are not helping pupils make better progress.

Consultant support has been provided to improve opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to explore and develop their ideas. Starting from a very low base teaching is beginning to show some signs of improvement and children are making better progress. However, observations made during this inspection indicate a lack of focus on learning in both the indoor and outdoor environments, which slows children's' development in communication and language and literacy.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Improved teaching and higher expectations of pupils have resulted in improved attitudes to learning by pupils. In all lessons observed pupils showed enthusiasm to learn and were involved in their learning. Better structures are in place for dealing with poor behaviour. Pupils say they like the new house system and enjoy earning points for their team, which lead to rewards.

Effective systems, including letters, legal action and rewards are leading to improved attendance. The school can identify individuals whose attendance is being pursued rigorously or have medical needs. Pupils are eager to share their attendance records and like to receive rewards for good attendance.

There have been no incidents of racial misunderstandings since the last inspection and pupils spoken to by inspectors both formally and informally were very positive about the way they get on with each other.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The two executive leaders are an excellent team, taking an equal part in the leadership of improvement at the school. They have shared the vision and mission for high expectations and challenge for school improvement. Staff speak highly of the new freedoms they experience as well as the drive for better teaching and achievement. One teacher said, 'Staff feel more valued. We are trusted to do our jobs. People have faith that we can do it.' Teachers particularly value the many opportunities for staff training and the positive impact of a new curriculum. Pupils also recognise the changes. They say everything has got better and enjoy the support of the two executive leaders and their teachers.

Monitoring and evaluation are effective. Monitoring through formal lesson observations, briefer visits to lessons and scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work gives leaders a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Leaders take rapid action to address areas which need to improve.

The leaders of literacy and mathematics have a clear vision of how they will develop their areas with action plans that detail next steps. The impact of these actions is clearly monitored and is evident in the improvements in reading seen in classrooms.

More rigorous performance-management targets have been agreed with all teachers. Targets are based on better teaching and pupils' progress. Individual plans for teachers are in place to improve teaching where practice is not good enough for pupils to make at least good progress.

The newly formed IEB is a small group of highly experienced members, including the Principal and the Chair of the Governing Body of Saint Mary's Academy Trust. This provides a strong link between the IEB and the academy sponsor. The transition to the new governing body of the academy is well thought out. The Chair of the IEB has a very

thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, pupils' progress and attainment. The IEB is already providing challenge and support for school leaders.

External support

The local authority representative continues to give strong, regular support. She provides an important link between the current leadership of the school and the academy sponsor which is helping the transition process. The local authority provided funding to ensure that appropriately skilled members were appointed to the IEB.

The governing body of Sandhill Primary School is enabling the executive leaders and staff from the school to play an integral role in the leadership and improvement of The Edmunds Primary School.