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Mr Garry Johnson
Headteacher
Millbridge Junior Infant and Nursery School
Vernon Road
Liversedge
West Yorkshire
WF15 6HU

Dear Mr Johnson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Millbridge Junior Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 8 July 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, one governor, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated. All classes were visited to evaluate teaching and pupils' work. In addition, school documentation related to school improvement was scrutinised.

Context

Since the inspection, the acting headteacher has been appointed as substantive headteacher. There has been a re-structure of the leadership team. One member of staff is on long-term sick leave and has been replaced by a supply teacher.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Both the school and local authority perceived the last inspection to be harsh. However, they have taken prompt action to address the areas for improvement. Much time has been spent continuing to develop and embed systems and procedures to improve teaching and ensure greater consistency across school. In addition, there has been ongoing work to secure the leadership of the school to ensure it is in a better position to achieve the rapid improvements necessary.

Planning for improvement is well-thought through. The local authority's plan and the school's plan are cohesive. The timely and appropriate support from literacy and mathematics consultants and another local school has resulted in focused and accurate action planning. Both plans make clear who will make the necessary improvements and who will check on their impact. They provide useful interim measures which describe what leadership, teaching, learning and behaviour should look like at each stage of the journey. However, neither plan provides measurable milestones for pupils' performance and the quality of teaching, so that governors can hold senior leaders to account for the progress it is making and challenge any underperformance.

Reviews of how reading, writing and mathematics are taught and resourced have resulted in appropriate, planned changes to the curriculum and the way these subjects are to be taught. In addition, the purchasing of resources and the re-writing of the mathematics calculation policy means the school is poised to move forward at the start of the new academic year.

Increased monitoring of teaching is helping teachers to improve individual aspects of their work. Middle leaders have taken an increasing role in checking, supporting and challenging teachers to do this. However, these checks have been focused on compliance with new policies and procedures to ensure consistency and not enough on whether this is making a difference to pupils' learning and achievement. Leaders are not yet gathering together all of the evidence they have to evaluate the quality of teaching more accurately. They understand that this is now crucial if an accurate view of teaching is to be gathered.

Effective practice in assessing and recording children's development in the Reception class needs to be shared with the nursery staff, so that leaders can check more accurately on how well children are doing and close gaps in learning and development from the outset. Additionally, Nursery and Reception classes must improve the outdoor areas to provide a high quality learning environment for children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly in speech, language and communication, and mathematics.

Improved systems and procedures to track and analyse pupils' achievement are providing the school with a clear picture of where there is underachievement. This sharpens leaders' focus on addressing gaps in learning and on holding staff to account. Leaders recognise that improved results in the end of key stage assessments and tests have been brought about by better teaching in Years 2 and 6 and support programmes rather than good teaching over time in all year groups. This makes gathering an accurate view of teaching all the more urgent, so that all staff can be held to account rigorously for the progress of their pupils.

The systems and procedures developed to improve attendance have borne fruit and there is a marked improvement in attendance this year. However, attendance is still below the 2013 national average.

Although actions have been put into place to support the governing body to increase its effectiveness, the impact of these actions is limited. Governing body meeting minutes show little indication of challenge to school leaders at this stage. Only one member of the governing body was available to meet with me. There are five existing vacancies on the governing body. Governors and the local authority must take immediate action to address this.

The local authority, governors and school are improving the quality and frequency of communications with parents and have met with parents to discuss the outcome of the inspection and their plans. There are plans to work with parents on specific aspects of school development such as supporting children to read and to understand better how mathematics is taught and learned.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer
Her Majesty's Inspector