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6 October 2014

Ms Andrea de Bunsen
The Headteacher
Kennel Lane School
Kennel Lane
Bracknell
Berkshire
RG42 2EX

Dear Ms de Bunsen

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kennel Lane School

Following my visit with Fiona Bridger-Wilkinson, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Veronica Young, Additional Inspector, to your school on 2 and 3 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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.

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 Bracknell Forest.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that none is inadequate and more is good by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of what pupils can do
 - focus their teaching more on telling pupils what they are expected to learn, rather than simply on what tasks they will complete, so pupils are able to assess how well they have done
 - match activities to the different needs of pupils
 - make sure time is not wasted in lessons on poor quality activities
 - let pupils know how well they have done and, where appropriate, how they can improve their work.
- Raise achievement in English and mathematics, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in sixth form, by:
 - ensuring that there is a consistent, whole-school approach to teaching reading and writing skills
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in a range of different subjects.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that teachers give pupils more opportunities to think about their learning and work more independently.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - analysing information about pupils' achievement over time, compared to national data, so that the school is secure in judging whether pupils are making expected progress
 - ensuring the impact of additional funding is carefully evaluated so that the school, including governors, know whether this money is being used effectively to support eligible pupils
 - using data about pupils' achievement to evaluate the school's strengths and areas for development
 - planning detailed actions for improvement, based on an accurate self-assessment of the schools' provision and outcomes
 - making sure that the phonics (matching letters to the sounds they make) approach to teaching reading to younger pupils is embedded across the school
 - ensuring that governors have the information they need in order to understand their role in holding the school fully to account.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 October 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority. Informal conversations were held with teachers, teaching assistants and students throughout the visit. Inspectors and senior leaders jointly observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Although progress in different classes and key stages remains uneven, students' overall achievement in English and mathematics is improving. This is true throughout the school, including in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form where improvement was identified as being most urgently required. Ability groupings, more interesting and challenging activities and carefully targeted support are beginning to enable students to make better progress and address gaps in their learning. Children in the Nursery and Reception are making a very positive start to school. Their progress is good and thoroughly documented. This more detailed approach is being replicated throughout the school.

Comprehensive systems to assess students' learning levels and to track rates of progress have recently been introduced. Targets are set for all students in English and mathematics and progress towards them is being monitored. Most recent assessments indicate that more students than previously have reached or exceeded expected levels in English, mathematics and science. In 2014, 83% of students met or exceeded their targets in these subjects compared with 71% the previous year. However, this improving profile is not replicated across all subject areas. End of academic year 2014 assessments are being externally analysed in greater detail. At the time of this monitoring inspection leaders were unaware of the comparative performance of different groups of pupils, including girls and boys or those with different need types. From the evidence available, it was not possible to draw conclusions about gaps in achievement between different groups.

A consistent approach to teaching reading and writing has been successfully implemented in the primary department. New approaches to teaching reading and writing in the secondary department, and to teaching mathematics throughout the school, have been planned, although not yet implemented. Subject leaders have purchased resources and staff training events are booked.

Staff understand the need to exploit all opportunities to extend students' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, in one physical education lesson, students were encouraged to keep a count of how many times they successfully caught a ball, and,

in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson, students contemplated how much money could be charged and earned at a fundraising event. In such ways, all subject areas are making a contribution to improving skills and raising achievement in mathematics and English.

The quality of teaching

Visits to classes in all key stages during this inspection indicate that there have been commendable improvements to the quality of teaching. Most notably, a high level of consistency in approach is being achieved. In all lessons, teachers set high expectations for behaviour and effort. They typically ensure that students know what they are expected to learn as well as understanding the activity or task to complete. Students of all ages and needs were observed working enthusiastically on a wide range of interesting and age-appropriate activities facilitated by helpful resources. Lesson planning now complies with a consistent format. Brief assessments of students' learning are completed on a daily basis and are used to refine planning further. As a result, time is rarely wasted on inappropriate activities and faster progress is secured. Furthermore, students regularly take part in reviewing their own learning. There are opportunities for dialogue between students, teachers and support staff about learning, as well as systems, including using smiley or sad faces, for students to indicate their levels of confidence. As a result of these approaches, and feedback provided in workbooks, students more clearly understand how well they have done and how they can further improve their work.

Communication between teachers and teaching assistants is effective and support is directed where it is most needed. Throughout the school, pupils' communication and independence, as well as literacy and numeracy skills, are relentlessly promoted. For example, in one geography lesson pupils chose, between signing, speaking or communication cards, how to express their knowledge and views about hot climates. The positive features observed are typical, although not exclusive. Some weak teaching remains in both the primary and secondary departments. When this occurs, lessons lack a sense of pace and direction. Less detailed and less accurate planning results in learning activities that are too difficult or are insufficiently challenging. Consequently, students do not progress well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During this monitoring inspection, behaviour in lessons and around the school was observed to be good and well ordered. A positive and happy atmosphere is apparent. Students usually attend school well and punctually. Attendance is closely monitored and any unexpected absence followed up. Attendance rates are similar to other schools of this type. Most students engage positively with learning and indicate they enjoy school. Students are now familiar with reviewing their own learning and opportunities for independence are routinely promoted. For example, Key Stage 3

students were observed choosing from a range of resources to help them with a piece of written English work about the Shakespearian character Puck.

The recording, monitoring and analysing of incidents of more challenging behaviour are systematically carried out. Every student's behaviour is considered and individual support plans drawn up as necessary. Triggers for poor or challenging behaviour are identified and guidance for managing such incidents is provided to staff. During this visit all staff modelled positive behaviours and were observed using a range of techniques, including offering students choices, giving unequivocal instructions and using sanctions and rewards to manage the range of behaviours to good effect. Pupils are kept safe and only rarely are lessons significantly disrupted. Staff training on behaviour management is regularly updated.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

School leaders are united in their determination to raise students' achievements and to secure school improvement. Numerous systems and practices have been reviewed, although many are at the early stages of implementation. Examples include approaches to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and systems to manage school data. More established improvements include raised expectations of teachers and enhanced collaboration between the primary and secondary departments.

All staff have undertaken training in assessment, as well as participating in moderation exercises to strengthen the accuracy of their judgements. Visits have been made to other schools to learn more about successful approaches to assessment. Achievement data are currently being compared to available national data and a more detailed analysis of the progress of different groups of students is being undertaken. Whilst acknowledging that data analysis is a critical source of evidence to review students' progress and to inform planning and evaluation, leaders have not secured this information rapidly enough. School plans have been combined into a new working document, known as the School Improvement Plan. This has reduced previous duplication and more clearly identifies the way ahead. Nevertheless, the plan is currently insufficiently influenced by up-to-date self-assessment or analysis of data. As a result, it is not possible to confirm that current priorities for action are rightly prioritised.

Governors and school staff know how much additional government funding has been received and what it has been spent on. However, no detailed analysis of the impact of this funding over the last year has been carried out. It is therefore not possible to make accurate judgements about the impact of this spending on raising students' achievements.

Improved communications and consistency of approach between the primary and secondary departments have been secured. As a result of greater collaboration,

teachers in the secondary department are conversant with the methods used to teach reading to younger students and are ensuring that such approaches are reinforced and built upon.

Governors hold a sharper focus than previously on the priorities for improvement. In addition to providing high levels of support, they are beginning to hold school leaders, including the headteacher, to account more thoroughly. However, challenge is not well recorded in minutes of governing body meetings. Governors now substantiate information by seeking advice from external consultants as well as through evidence gained from school visits, meetings with staff and headteacher reports. Through a review of governance and a more recent audit of skills, governors are ensuring that they understand the requirements of their roles and are gaining the necessary skills and knowledge to carry these out to a higher standard. Consequently, the governing body is adding strength to overall school leadership.

External support

The local authority has provided extensive support to the school, most of which has been well received. However, notes of visits, as well as minutes of monitoring meetings, are frequently narrative in style and lack a sharp edge of evaluation. There are often no action points recorded, giving little sense of urgency to the need for further improvement.

The relationship between the local authority, as a whole, and the school has not been conducive to securing rapid improvement. Too much time and energy have been spent on matters other than those identified as requiring urgent improvement.