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20 November 2014

Margaret Bainbridge
Interim headteacher
Weald Junior School
Robin Hood Drive
Harrow
HA3 7DH

Dear Mrs Bainbridge

Special measures monitoring inspection of Weald Junior School

Following my visit with Sibani Raychaudhuri, additional inspector, to your school on 18–19 November 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 March 2014. 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 Harrow.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Loukes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is typically good by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide work that is not too hard or too easy for pupils
 - give pupils clear guidance to help them improve and to correct errors or misconceptions
 - always expect enough of pupils and do not accept work that is not good enough.
- Improve the achievement of pupils, especially in reading and writing, by:
 - making sure that spelling, grammar and punctuation are taught well so that pupils gain the required knowledge, understanding and skills quickly and securely
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise and reinforce these writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by making sure that they consistently take care with their work, do their best and maintain their concentration when working.
- Strengthen leadership and management and build the school's capacity to improve by:
 - ensuring that checking the quality of teaching and pupils' progress is rigorous and accurate
 - ensuring that written development planning identifies the main priorities, shows how these are to be tackled and how success will be measured
 - improving the skills of middle leaders to enable them to play a full part in securing improvement
 - ensuring that the pupil premium is used properly to support eligible pupils and help them to achieve well.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18–19 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, teachers, middle leaders and teaching assistants. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors made short visits to each classroom accompanied by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and to the playground at lunchtime. A range of documentation was reviewed, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, and those of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching. The school's record of recruitment checks was scrutinised.

Context

It is proposed to amalgamate Weald Junior School with Weald Infant and Nursery School from 1 April 2015. It is also proposed to expand the resulting school so that it has four forms of entry from 1 September 2016. As part of the consultation process a series of meetings have taken place for local residents, parents and staff. If the amalgamation proceeds, the school would be rebuilt as part of the government's Priority School Building Programme. A final decision about the futures of the schools will be made in January 2015. Three of the five senior leadership posts are currently filled on an interim basis.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Results in the 2014 tests for Year 6 pupils showed an increase in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. This was the result of a more focused approach to the teaching of these subjects. Writing and mathematics results were below national averages. Work in pupils' books demonstrates clearly that recent improvements in the quality of teaching have had a positive impact on achievement. As a result of the school's focus on improving writing, standards have risen noticeably. Because teachers have equally high expectations of pupils' writing in subjects other than English, there is no significant difference in its quality across the curriculum. Work in pupils' books shows that standards are also rising in mathematics, although at a slower pace than in writing. Pupils' work is now considerably neater and well organised as a result of raised expectations of standards of presentation.

The quality of teaching

There is now a greater focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Teachers say that there has been a shift of emphasis from 'what they do' to 'what pupils have learnt'.

Pupils are increasingly clear about what they are expected to learn during lessons and about their personal targets. They feel that their teachers have a good understanding of their individual needs. Teachers routinely challenge pupils to improve their use of vocabulary and punctuation when writing, in every subject. There are now many more opportunities for pupils to write at length in a variety of genres and in different subjects. Teachers report that pupils are now more enthusiastic writers.

Teachers' marking is now more focused. Comments point out specific areas for improvement, requiring pupils to respond. This may involve correcting errors or completing a further challenge to ensure that learning is secure. This practice is stronger in the marking of writing; there is a need for teachers to analyse errors in mathematics more thoroughly so that they can support pupils to overcome misconceptions.

While it is clear that teachers now take greater account of pupils' prior understanding in their planning, teaching sometimes moves from one aspect of mathematics to another before pupils have fully understood a concept. This prevents pupils from developing a secure foundation on which to build. In mathematics there is too much emphasis on what pupils should do in order to complete a task. Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to ensuring that pupils have a deep understanding of the underlying concepts. Teachers' use of mathematical vocabulary is not always precise enough to support pupils' learning effectively. More able pupils are sometimes given work which does not stretch them. This lack of challenge slows their progress and prevents them gaining a deeper understanding.

Teachers now take greater account of the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Much of the support they currently receive takes place in small groups beyond the classroom. However, leaders are clear that improvements in the quality of teaching overall will reduce the need for this type of intervention. Targets are set for what these pupils are expected to achieve by the end of the year. However, expectations of the gains in their knowledge and understanding as a result of their short-term support are not defined clearly enough.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are keen to do well and are aware of the need to be well prepared for the next stage of their education. Older pupils explain that there has been a noticeable increase in what is expected of them. They say that teachers no longer accept anything less than their best work. This is evident in pupils' books.

Lunchtimes are well organised. Cones demarcate the space available for each playground activity, preventing games from encroaching on those of others. Pupils enjoy using the equipment that is available, including skipping ropes and hoops. They also practise their cricket skills or use their imagination to create their own games.

Specialist sports staff supervise larger-scale activities, ensuring that there is sufficient opportunity for pupils to be physically active.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

There has been a determined focus on increasing the capacity of leadership at different levels. The roles of year group leaders and those with responsibility for leading English and mathematics have been clearly defined. Year group leaders are now involved in checking the quality of teachers' planning and in scrutinising pupils' work. They check for compliance with agreed procedures and keep an eye on the progress that pupils are making. As a result of the deputy headteacher's effective support and guidance, year group leaders have a more confident approach and are having a positive impact on teachers' practice. They now take greater accountability for the progress of pupils in their year group.

Teachers report that their practice is scrutinised more frequently than in the past and that they receive clear guidance about how to improve. They are expected to act quickly on advice given, with leaders checking promptly that changes have been implemented. Teachers explain that there is a 'no excuses' approach to pupils' underperformance.

The governing body has taken a robust stance on recruitment. It has rightly refrained from making appointments where it has not been fully assured of a candidate's quality. This has contributed to a number of interim staff being appointed, including three senior leaders. The governing body has maintained its focus on pupils' progress and the need for urgent improvement despite the increased workload related to the proposed amalgamation. Staff underperformance is challenged, with additional support provided and action taken as required.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support. Mathematics and English consultants have worked with the leaders of these subjects to improve leaders' ability to review teachers' planning. Links have been brokered with local schools, enabling leaders to observe good and outstanding practice. Year group leaders have received training to improve their skills in lesson observation, work scrutiny and the delivery of feedback to teachers. As a result, they have grown in confidence and are now playing a more active role in improving the quality of teaching. The Harrow School Improvement Partner provides effective and highly valued support for the school.