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Ms Sarah Tomkinson
Headteacher
White Rock Primary School
Davies Avenue
Paignton
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Dear Ms Tomkinson

Special measures monitoring inspection of White Rock Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 December 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 May 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and phase leaders, the national leader of education, a representative of the local authority, two representatives of the parent forum and the Chair and two members of the governing body. The inspector observed some lessons as part of a tour of the school. The single central record was checked. The local authority's statement of action and the post-Ofsted action plan were evaluated.

Context

The acting headteacher became the substantive headteacher from September 2014. More than half of the teaching staff have joined the school since the last inspection. Six of these are newly qualified teachers. The newly qualified teachers appointed before the last inspection are being supported by the Torbay teaching school alliance. A national leader of education is working with the school to help the school improve the quality of education it provides.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You have successfully built on the work you started before the last inspection to secure teachers' accountability for improving teaching and pupils' achievement. The teachers leading the subject and phase teams are enthusiastic about the changes that they are implementing. They report a significant upsurge in pupils' attitudes to learning and better standards of work than in recent years.

The tour of the school showed pupils working hard. The thoughtful choice of topics motivates boys to write at length. Teachers are responding well to the high expectations you have of all pupils in their reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are evaluating pupils' learning at the end of each day, and using this information to improve their next day's lesson planning. The purchase of resources to support learning in lessons, such as tablet computers and reading books, has removed one of the barriers that held pupils back from achieving more. Improvements to the building send a strong message to everyone that you want the best for pupils.

You and the deputy headteacher show an eagerness to work with parents. In turn, parents appreciate your quick and appropriate response to concerns they express either formally through the parents' forum or at other times. Teachers are also playing their part in building the partnership with parents by providing feedback on their child's progress and helpful suggestions.

Governors are clear about the improvements required. The review of governors' effectiveness has identified distinct gaps in how they carry out their responsibility to check on the school's performance. The small team of governors that remain following the review are clear about their next steps to ensure robust challenges to your plans and assess the short-term and long-term benefits for pupils. A pressing priority is to secure oversight of the financial costs of implementing the action plan.

The local authority statement of action builds on the capacity in the school leadership. In the short term it is clear about how the local authority proposes to check on the impact of the consultants working with the school. There is a well-defined plan showing how the local authority expects to sustain the improvement in the future. The plan provides a strong platform for checking progress of the post-Ofsted inspection priorities, with the exception of ensuring that teaching provides greater interest for pupils, particularly boys.

The school's post-inspection action plan responds comprehensively to the priorities set out in the inspection report. The plan identifies specific times to review the impact of planned actions. These reviews are well spaced, allowing time for changes to be secured. The expectations of improvement at these times become increasingly demanding. The plan makes consistent references to subject leaders' strategies to

check on the implementation and effectiveness of planned actions. However, the approaches are not well defined for governors to develop their oversight of school leadership.

The effective training of learning support assistants ensures their skills are better used to aid improvements in literacy. The push to ensure all staff are aware of, and active in, improving reading has seen more pupils' reading ages at or exceeding their chronological age. This work combines well with the investment in computer software reading programmes and training all teachers to teach phonics. Many of the disadvantaged pupils are benefitting from this use of the pupil premium funding.

You are demonstrating strong and decisive leadership. You have challenged the teachers to look afresh at how they inspire and encourage pupils to become motivated learners. School leaders undertake an effective combination of lesson observations, reviewing pupils' work and regular checks on attainment. This work allows leaders and staff to review the progress towards ensuring that the quality of teaching is good and that pupils are making stronger progress than in the past.

The national leader of education provides well-constructed guidance to help you maintain the drive for improvement. He has identified, through regularly checking on pupils' progress, the additional support required for staff. The help from the local teaching school and specialist trainers has been timely, particularly for the deputy headteacher to help his management of teaching and learning, and to start to raise expectations of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

You have made it clear to staff how their performance is managed. Teachers who cannot yet match up to these raised expectations are supported well through the professional development programme. The programme is making good use of partnerships with the local teaching school to ensure that the quality of teaching is rapidly improved. There is an effective package of regular support stipulated for newly qualified teachers, to ensure their skills are strengthened and weaker aspects of practice are addressed quickly.

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 appoint a newly qualified teacher 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 Torbay. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk
Her Majesty's Inspector