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19 March 2015

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 with Rosemary Batty, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17 and 18 March 2015, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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 for Children and Young People for Kirklees.

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6, so that it is good or better, to accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, by ensuring:
 - inadequate teaching is eradicated
 - all teachers have high expectations about what pupils can achieve
 - teachers plan challenging and exciting activities which provide the appropriate level of challenge for different groups of pupils that sustain their interest and concentration, so that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are always good
 - teachers check pupils' learning and progress more accurately, mark their work more carefully to inform pupils what to do next to improve, and give them time to do so
 - teaching assistants know what is expected of them, and that their skills are developed so they can help pupils to learn effectively.

- Ensure pupils' achievement is good or better in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 to 6, by:
 - encouraging pupils to read more, in school and at home
 - developing younger pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make, and older pupils' skills in understanding, and deducing, what they have read
 - making sure pupils' mental calculation skills are practised daily
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to solve problems and to apply them in other subjects
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use a wide range of language when writing for different audiences, and in different subjects, and to improve pupils' accuracy in spelling and punctuating sentences.

- Raise attendance and reduce persistent absence to at least the national averages, by:
 - enforcing strongly the school's recently introduced guidance to parents not to take holidays during term time
 - enhancing pupils' desire to attend school regularly through daily motivating and successful learning experiences.

- Reduce considerably the number of incidents of pupils' misbehaviour by ensuring:
 - all staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and enforce consistently the school's behaviour policy.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance, by:

- building a robust senior leadership team, and developing the skills of other teachers with responsibilities so that they can help to drive improvements in their areas
- improving the tracking of pupils' progress so that the achievement of different groups of pupils can be identified more swiftly and the necessary actions taken to prevent them from falling behind
- making sure that leaders and all staff fully understand what constitutes good and better progress for pupils given their individual starting points
- checking more rigorously the quality of teaching and ensuring feedback to staff about how to improve their teaching and pupils' learning is clearer, and acted upon
- improving the governing body's knowledge of how well the school is doing, so that governors can hold leaders more rigorously to account for their performance.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 March 2015.

Evidence

Inspectors observed teaching and pupils' behaviour in lessons and at informal times during the school day. They looked at pupils' work and scrutinised documents related to the work of the school. Inspectors met with the headteacher, the leadership team, teachers and groups of pupils, a small number of parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. They also met with the executive headteacher of the academy trust that the school is due to join.

Context

A temporary teacher has left and a permanent teacher has returned from maternity leave to teach in the Year 1/2 class. The school is due to join the Share Multi-Academy Trust as a sponsored academy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The capacity of the school's leadership is increasing and, since the last monitoring inspection, leaders have not relied on external support to help lead and manage improvements in teaching. The systematic checks they make are much more robust and are focused on developing the particular aspects of teaching they have identified to be less effective. Some of the leaders' earlier evaluations of teaching did not focus sharply enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, but this is improving.

Leaders are using the information they gather from lesson observations, together with pupils' progress information, to assess the quality of teaching over time. This is used for teachers' performance management and to inform the school's evaluation of teaching. Additionally, it enables the governing body to make close checks on the improvements in teaching and assess the impact of leaders' work. Nevertheless, leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is overgenerous because it does not focus sufficiently on the impact teaching is having on pupils' achievement.

Leaders track pupils' achievement more effectively. They have continued to develop tracking systems, so that any weaknesses in the achievement of different groups of pupils are identified swiftly and the necessary actions taken to tackle underachievement. Teachers take more responsibility for gathering and analysing data about the achievements of pupils they teach and plan the actions they will take to close the gaps in pupils' achievement. In discussion with leaders, they agree which interventions and support are most appropriate. The special needs coordinator maps additional provision for these pupils and checks closely on the progress they make. The wealth of interventions is helping to close gaps for these pupils but, as yet, not all teachers are adept at meeting these pupils' needs in lessons.

Leaders have reviewed targets for pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 and have raised their expectations of the standards Year 2 pupils must achieve. Nevertheless, they have not checked closely enough on how accurately the numerical tracking system matches pupils' starting points in Year 1.

The improvements needed within the early years have resulted in children developing their knowledge and skills at a faster rate. The early years' leader, supported by senior leaders, has been instrumental in securing a number of improvements in teaching and the provision. Nevertheless, the evaluation of children's learning and development in the Nursery is deficient and it is unclear how adults have gathered their view of children's development and progress.

Generalised statements contained in the schools' self-evaluation about leadership, teaching and achievement have given leaders a more generous view than could be justified by the evidence seen on inspection. For example, leaders say that the work teachers provide is challenging, but this is not a consistent picture across school. Many actions, such as improving the challenge for the most able in mathematics, are embryonic and have not had sufficient impact on the achievement of these pupils. Teachers are still getting to grips with the demands of the new curriculum for the most able pupils.

Leaders' actions to improve the behaviour and attendance of pupils, and support those who find school life challenging, are increasingly effective. Pupils say that school is a better place where they feel safer and included. Parents express greater confidence in the leadership.

The governing body has relied heavily on a small number of governors to provide the checks and challenge needed. Minutes of the latest full governing body meeting show increased and focused challenge. This is supported by planned, regular visits and checks from a small group of governors. Nevertheless, the capacity of the governing body to continue and increase its level of challenge is fragile, given that improvements in attendance at the full governing body are very recent and the attendance of non-staff governors at the standards committee remains poor.

The quality of teaching

Although teaching is improving, it is inconsistent across school. There are weaker pockets of teaching within each phase and across subjects. The recent improvements in teaching are not yet having a strong enough impact on pupils' achievement over time and there is an overreliance on the work of interventions to close achievement gaps.

Where teaching is improving strongly

- Teachers have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning and they use simple, but effective, methods of promoting these.

- Teachers build upon prior assessments of what pupils can do, so that teaching is pitched appropriately. Consequently, teaching motivates and engages pupils, work is challenging and the least able pupils are skilfully included.
- Teachers plan their teaching in carefully considered sequences to ensure that pupils deepen their understanding and make better progress. Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to use and apply their knowledge and skills, explain their reasoning and consider a purpose for their learning. This engages pupils fully in lessons and ensures that they make better progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson, young pupils were sequencing numbers up to a 100. They considered the place value of numbers and were challenged to explain why one number would come before or after another. They used this in the context of a postman sorting letters for delivery.
- Pupils' thinking is challenged through skilful questioning and appropriate tasks. There are opportunities to explain reasoning and use subject-related vocabulary, which is modelled well by adults. This is increasing pupils' confidence to respond.
- Teachers give pupils time to correct minor errors and improve their work. Marking helps to deepen pupils' thinking and pupils respond positively to this.
- Teachers have created purposeful learning environments which support pupils' learning. Pupils know where to look for help before asking an adult.
- Teachers use teaching assistants effectively to support, challenge and develop pupils' learning.

Where teaching is least effective

- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to ensure that their teaching is pitched accurately. This leads to pupils, especially the most able, doing work that is too easy and some pupils struggle. Pupils' progress is hampered, especially in mathematics, because there are gaps in their learning which teachers have not identified and addressed.
- The sequence of teaching in mathematics does not build upon or develop pupils' understanding accurately enough. Tasks often require too little thought and miss opportunities to extend and deepen pupils' understanding of the relationships between mathematical concepts, operations and numbers.
- The strategies teachers use do not engage pupils well enough to ensure that all pupils pay attention and make progress with their learning.
- Teachers spend too long on things that do not help pupils to progress and plan activities that occupy pupils, rather than develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can and should, do are too low.
- Teachers do not make effective use of teaching assistants to help pupils learn. Some teaching assistants hamper progress, because they do not probe pupils' thinking and understanding well enough, nor do they address errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar when working with small groups.
- Teachers do not use time well so that time is lost after breaks and between lessons.

- Teachers do not distinguish well enough between errors and misconceptions when marking pupils' work; consequently, pupils' lack of understanding is not addressed through teaching. Not all teachers are following the school's policy and procedure for marking.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Changes to the way behaviour is managed are having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour around school and in lessons. There is increased supervision at break and lunchtimes and more resources to support positive play experiences. Staff and pupils say it is much improved, although there are still some pockets of weaker behaviour, which relates to a minority of pupils. Record-keeping is much more robust and shows that the response to poor behaviour and subsequent actions are followed through appropriately. More serious incidents, however, are not always recorded in chronological order. This indicates that, although they are recorded fully, the recording of these incidents is not timely enough.

Pupils say they feel safe and can talk about the school's rules and expectations and explain how they are taught to keep safe. They speak positively about the work the school has undertaken with them about bullying since the last monitoring inspection. It is clear that the creative approach to this has ensured that the key points of their learning remain with them.

Pupils' attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Persistent absence is closely checked and the leaders make effective use of other agencies to support them in improving the attendance of a small number of pupils. Pupils' lateness continues to be an issue.

The governing body meets all statutory safeguarding requirements.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In almost all year groups, the proportion of pupils meeting age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics is improving, but remains low. This is because pupils are making only expected progress from very low starting points and not enough of them are doing better than expected in order to catch up quickly. Where gaps are closing, it is because of the targeted additional support some pupils receive. Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are not closing fast enough and in some instances, they are widening. Pupils with special needs are gaining ground because of the effective interventions they receive. Some of their independent class work shows that these pupils produce a higher standard of work than others in reading and writing.

There is insufficient challenge for the most able pupils and it is clear that, in mathematics, teachers are trying to get to grips with the demands and raised

expectations of the new curriculum. This means that these pupils are not always making the progress they should.

In the early years, there is a significant shift in proportion of children on track to achieve a good level of development. This shift is stronger in one Reception class, where disadvantaged children are catching up quickly and are now doing better than others. Similarly, children with special needs are making accelerated progress. Girls, however, do better than boys and the gap between them is widening in both Reception classes. In Nursery, leaders do not gather sufficient assessment information in children's individual records of achievement to judge the security and accuracy of information about children's achievement.

External support

Up until the last inspection, the local authority has provided the support the school needs, however the challenge for the school is not as robust as it needs to be. There are insufficient checks made on how well the school is doing and the accuracy of leaders' evaluations.

The lead academy of the Shares multi-academy trust has started to work with leaders before the school joins the trust. The Chief Executive Officer (designate) of the trust now attends governing body meetings as an observer and provides an update on the academisation process. Plans are in place to co-opt a governor from the lead academy to ensure that the number of non-staff governors increases and to provide a direct link with the academy. The lead academy has also shared future plans for supporting and improving teaching.