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15 November 2018

Ms Fi McGregor
Headteacher
Larkrise Primary School
Boundary Brook Road
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX4 4AN

Dear Ms McGregor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Larkrise Primary School

Following my visit with Christopher Crouch, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 31 October and 1 November 2018, 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 that 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 that took place in May 2018.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dom Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2018.

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that:
 - teaching is pitched accurately, offers sufficient challenge and meets the needs of all groups of pupils so that they make consistently good progress
 - teachers raise their expectations of pupils' behaviour and of what pupils can achieve
 - pupils with low starting points, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are given better support to help them make good progress
 - pupils are given more opportunities to write at length and apply their skills in a broad range of subjects across the curriculum.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - eliminating low-level disruptive behaviour
 - taking rapid action so that pupils feel safe at all times and are not disturbed by the behaviour of pupils with challenging needs.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors have a more accurate view of the school's work
 - leaders review and improve the support for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - subject leaders, the leader for special educational needs and other leaders evaluate more effectively the quality of teaching and learning, including the additional support for pupils
 - the curriculum is planned more rigorously so that pupils can develop their skills, knowledge and understanding well across a range of subjects
 - the school's website meets statutory requirements.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 31 October 2018 to 01 November 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and subject leaders, and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors spoke with pupils both formally and informally during lessons and at breaktimes. A range of documents was considered, including information about pupils' progress, the school's improvement plans, records of behaviour and the school's record of checks on staff.

Context

Since the previous inspection the new headteacher has taken up post. Additionally, nine new teachers and six support staff have joined the school. A review of governance has taken place.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have wasted no time in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The newly appointed headteacher has brought much-needed rigour and ambition to leading improvements at Larkrise and much has been achieved in the short time since the school was judged inadequate. She is supported ably by the deputy headteacher. Together they share a strong determination to improve standards of education and pupils' achievements throughout key stages 1 and 2. Leaders' improvement plans are suitably detailed and actions for school development prioritised appropriately. Timescales are ambitious and achievable to ensure that progress is rapid. Leaders, including governors, are not complacent. They demonstrate unswerving commitment and are resolute in their drive to make Larkrise a good school.

Importantly, leaders have ensured that safeguarding is now effective. During the previous inspection some pupils stated they did not feel safe at school. That is no longer the case. Leaders quickly completed a pupil survey to understand fully why some felt unsafe at school. Leaders acted swiftly and successfully to improve how adults dealt with some pupils' volatile behaviour. These incidents, that in the past frightened some pupils, have now reduced in number significantly. Pupils told inspectors that classrooms are now much calmer and that they feel safe and happy at school.

Leaders are taking early steps to improve provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. A pupil premium review is scheduled for later in the term, and leaders are prioritising the extra good-quality help that disadvantaged pupils need to make stronger progress. The special educational needs leader is working diligently to ensure that teachers

are better equipped to plan learning suitable for this group of pupils' needs. This work is still developing but is beginning to have a positive impact on the wider achievements of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Middle leaders are beginning to evaluate more precisely the quality of teaching and learning. For example, this term the English and mathematics coordinators have completed a scrutiny of pupils' work in exercise books. They are using the information they gather more effectively to evaluate pupils' progress in these subjects. The English and mathematics coordinators have also produced useful action plans to drive ongoing improvements in their areas of responsibility. However, subject leaders in many other subjects are new in post. As a result, the school's work in developing the wider curriculum is still in its early stages.

A review of governance has taken place. Wisely, governors have reflected upon the outcomes of this process, and of an additional audit of skills which they have completed, to refine their practice. They are beginning to work much more efficiently, and with greater focus, in holding leaders to account. Importantly, the governing body has been strengthened by the successful recruitment of new governors well placed to assist the school to improve. Governors are ambitious to support and challenge leaders more successfully to ensure that all pupils achieve their best.

Leaders have commissioned a new school website. They know what statutory information needs to be published and much of this has already been produced. Leaders are committed to seeing the new school website come online shortly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

There are promising signs that the quality of teaching and learning is beginning to improve. In the very best lessons learning is more accurately tailored to pupils' needs. Pupils respond well when the level of challenge is right, producing work of an appropriate standard for their age. Some pupils are also developing a growing pride in their work and relish the opportunity to celebrate their achievements with their peers, teachers and headteacher.

However, teaching and learning of this standard is not yet typical throughout key stages 1 and 2. Some teaching is still not pitched accurately, and expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are too low. Leaders are beginning to address this more fully through appraisal and additional staff training.

Teachers are tackling more successfully incidents of low-level disruption in lessons. Leaders have provided additional training to help teachers manage pupils' behaviour. Staff report this has been very useful. In the best lessons, inspectors saw teachers use these new techniques to keep pupils focused on their learning. Some teachers are doing this very successfully, others are still building these skills. Overall, rates of low-level disruption in lessons are falling.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour is improving. Leaders have rewritten the school's behaviour policy and communicated it well to staff and pupils. Pupils have a much clearer understanding of what is expected of them. They know well the school's 'five golden rules' and are becoming much more adept at following them routinely. When staff uphold them rigorously and deploy the other strategies they have learned to manage behaviour, lessons are more typically calm and productive. However, these behaviours are not yet fully embedded. Some pupils need more consistent support from staff to become successful learners.

Leaders' actions are ensuring that levels of very poor behaviour continue to fall. For example, staff have been provided with useful training to help them defuse situations where pupils might become distressed, angry or violent. Importantly, staff are swift to support pupils in these situations and the additional care they provide them has been enhanced.

Outcomes for pupils

There are promising signs that pupils' writing is improving. Inspectors noted that pupils are writing at length in a range of different genres, more frequently than in the past. For example, in Year 6, pupils had been imagining what life at sea was like as a sailor on the HMS Beagle. Some of their writing was of a high standard, using exciting vocabulary and effectively structured sentences. Leaders' curriculum planning demonstrates that more opportunities are available for pupils to write across the curriculum.

External support

The local authority is providing some good-quality support for leaders. This effective partnership is assisting the headteacher to develop middle and senior leadership and evaluate effectively the quality of teaching and learning throughout Larkrise. For example, senior leaders have already been provided the opportunity to visit a local good school to help develop best practice at Larkrise. The headteacher has also appreciated support from the local authority's 'system leader', who, for instance, has assisted her in checking standards of teaching at Larkrise.