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23 October 2014

Mrs M Davis
The Headteacher
Walmore Hill Primary School
Walmore Hill
Minsterworth
Gloucester
GL2 8LA

Dear Mrs Davis

Special measures monitoring inspection of Walmore Hill Primary School

Following my visit with Paul Jones, Associate Inspector, to your school on 22 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 January 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 Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and speed up pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers have sufficiently high expectations of the quality, presentation and quantity of pupils' work
 - teachers plan lessons that challenge pupils of all abilities, especially the most able
 - teachers regularly check on pupils' learning in lessons so that work can be adapted as required
 - individual pupils' targets are set that help pupils to move on to their next stage of learning with confidence.
- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by:
 - providing more challenging opportunities for pupils to apply their number skills
 - providing opportunities for pupils to use mathematical knowledge in other subjects
 - making sure that marking clearly identifies the strengths in pupils' work and provides clear guidance about how improvement can be made.
- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - all leaders effectively check the quality of teaching and set targets that are directly related to pupils' progress
 - leaders set precise targets with staff for improving their teaching skills and provide appropriate training to help them improve the quality of their teaching
 - systems to track pupils' progress are followed consistently by all staff in order to identify and act upon any underachievement
 - subject leaders are given the opportunity and training to monitor the quality of provision and pupils' learning in their subjects.
- Improve governors' skills and knowledge in analysing information on pupils' progress and how it compares with schools nationally, to enable them to challenge leaders more rigorously to improve the standards achieved by pupils.

External reviews of both governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22 October 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. Inspectors also met with the executive headteacher and other members of staff, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The substantive headteacher retired in June 2014. The governing body has seconded a headteacher from a neighbouring primary school to be the executive headteacher of Walmore Hill Primary School. The executive headteacher has been in post since 23 June 2014. Since her appointment, the school's leaders have reviewed the staffing levels and reduced the number of classes from three to two. One teacher has left the school and the school has secured the services of an experienced teacher to support the implementation of the school's improvement plans. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed and two governors have resigned. The governing body is currently seeking applications for new governors. The external review of the governing body has been completed. The school has also conducted a review of its pupil premium funding arrangements.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2014 Key Stage 2 assessments record that the percentage of Year 6 pupils achieving the expected level in reading was higher than the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving the expected levels in both the mathematics and the writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling assessments was lower than average. Very few pupils attained the higher levels.

In 2014, Key Stage 1 pupils achieved lower than average results in reading, but were broadly in line with the national average in writing and mathematics. Very few pupils attained the higher levels.

The school leaders have reviewed pupils' performance in the 2014 assessments. They have identified the need to urgently develop and improve the quality of pupils' writing and to provide greater challenge for pupils, thereby enabling them to attain the higher levels.

A new tracking system has been introduced recently to monitor pupils' progress accurately. The intention is to set pupils appropriately challenging targets, build in regular assessment points and ensure all pupils are making good progress. At present, the school's data show that pupils eligible for the government's additional pupil premium funding make similar progress to other pupils at the school. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and made good progress last year. The evidence in pupils' books shows that pupils have made appropriate progress since the start of the new academic year. Work in mathematics books indicates that

pupils are being set work that is appropriately challenging and matched to their ages and abilities. This is helping to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. Pupils are also being encouraged to use their mathematical skills when completing problem solving activities.

The quality of teaching

Importantly, the evidence gathered during lesson observations shows that teachers' expectations of pupils are increasing. Teachers are planning work that often takes appropriate account of pupils' differing ages and abilities. As a result, pupils are being challenged more frequently than previously and thereby enabled to develop and extend their knowledge and understanding.

In other aspects of the school's work, pupils are not yet being supported well enough to aspire to, and reach, higher standards. The current classroom displays do not provide good evidence of pupils producing high quality work. Neither do they provide exemplars of work that reflect the high standards which some pupils are capable of achieving. As a result, pupils are not being presented with examples of what high quality work looks like, which limits their understanding of what is possible.

The school has recently reviewed and implemented a revised marking policy. As a result, teachers mark pupils' work by writing comments to highlight where pupils have achieved well and give suggestions about how work can be improved. In the main, this approach is working successfully and pupils understand the new system. However, although the teachers' comments were written neatly, a few of the younger pupils and the less able pupils found some of the words that teachers wrote too difficult to read. As a consequence, these pupils were unable to respond to the teachers' comments or follow guidance about how to improve their work.

The school is also changing its procedure to monitor and track pupils' progress. Short-term targets are being set so that pupils can demonstrate that they have gained competence in learning a new skill or through developing their knowledge and understanding. As yet, pupils are unfamiliar with their end-of-year targets. As a result, pupils are unable to explain which aspect of their work they need to improve in order to move forward and increase their learning.

As a result of recent changes, the school is increasingly confident that pupils are now making faster progress than happened in previous years. Teachers are assessing pupils more frequently than before and, as a consequence, they have a better and more accurate understanding of pupils' level of development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and courteous. They get on well together and relationships within school are positive and based on respect. This positive atmosphere promotes learning across the school.

Many of the pupils who spoke to inspectors describe how pupils' behaviour has improved recently, particularly since the school introduced its new behaviour policy.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive. However, in some lessons, teachers remind pupils too frequently about the need to sit still. At times, the level of pupils' conversation is quite intrusive and this prevents some pupils from being able to focus their attention sufficiently on the learning activities. As a result, teachers interrupt their teaching, which slows the rate of learning taking place.

The few parents that inspectors met also spoke positively about pupils' behaviour, and some commented specifically about the recent improvements that have happened this term.

Pupils feel safe at school and are confident that they can approach adults if they have any concerns.

Pupils' attendance has improved this term so that it now broadly in line with the national average. The school is continuing its efforts to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the previous monitoring inspection there have been some very significant changes to the school's leadership. The secondment of an executive headteacher to lead the school, along with the appointment of a new Chair of the Governing Body, has resulted in a completely new leadership team being created. In addition, changes to staffing, including the appointment of a new teacher, have introduced a real sense of momentum being built, with a strong desire to move the school forwards.

Before these changes were introduced, much of the governing body's time was taken up with evaluating and deciding how best to support the school bring about the changes needed. To some extent this was necessary, but the time taken did delay the school in being able to begin its improvement journey.

Since taking up her new role, the executive headteacher and the other school leaders have quickly gained an accurate overview of the school's current situation. They have identified the improvements needed and have developed a suitable plan designed to ensure that pupils achieve better results than they did in previous years.

The school's leaders have rightly focused their priorities on improving the quality of teaching. Performance management systems have been reviewed and new targets, based on pupils' outcomes, are being introduced. This approach is increasing teachers' accountability and responsibility for pupils to make good progress each year.

Links between Walmore Hill Primary School and Woodside Primary School, the executive headteacher's school, are strengthening. Staff from both schools have

joined together for training days. This is providing opportunities to discuss and evaluate successful teaching strategies.

Teachers with responsibility for leading English and mathematics are increasing their contribution to the school's improvement work. They are taking greater ownership of their respective areas by leading and monitoring developments. As a result of their engagement, they are developing a clear insight into how teaching strategies need to change and improve.

The school's steps to improve communication with pupils' families are recognised and appreciated by parents. Regular newsletters are being published as a strategy to keep families informed of developments as they occur. The next step involves the governing body reviewing the school's website to ensure that the information complies fully with government expectations and provides valuable and relevant information to interested parties.

The governing body is fully focused on strengthening its role working with and challenging the school to improve. Governors are benefiting from the executive headteacher's comprehensive reports about the school's progress. This detailed information is helping governors to gain a clear understanding of the school's current position as well as enabling them to plan for the future. The governing body has recently reviewed governors' roles and responsibilities. This activity has helped governors to understand that they need to be able to better hold the school leaders to account.

Although many of these changes are bringing about signs of early improvement, the school still remains vulnerable. The fact that the executive headteacher's services have only been secured for a year means that there is some uncertainty over the school's long-term leadership. This is also the case for the newly seconded teacher who joins the school in November 2014. As such, the school does not yet have the security of knowing what the leadership and staffing situation will be at the end of this academic year.

External support

Immediately after the inspection in January 2014, the local authority began its intervention programme to support the school improve. The pace of improvement was initially slow but, having worked with the governing body and secured the secondment of the executive headteacher, there is now a real sense of purpose across the school.

The local authority is monitoring the school's improvement programme very carefully. The authority's reports are detailed and informative and provide the senior team and the governing body with a clear evaluation of the school's current rate of progress.

The local authority is also supporting the school's improvement by providing additional funding for staff development. In addition, the governing body is receiving

appropriate training, which is helping governors to develop the skills and experience needed to drive the school's improvement.