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Mark Snow
Headteacher
Barton Primary School and Early Years Centre
Green Street
Newport
PO30 2AN

Dear Mr Snow

Special measures monitoring inspection of Barton Primary School and Early Years Centre

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 8 May 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. Thank you also for accommodating Tracy Hannon, seconded inspector, who was shadowing the work of the lead inspector during this visit.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2013. 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. Newly qualified teachers should only be appointed in consultation with the local authority and where appropriate support can be offered by a permanent member of teaching staff.

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 Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely
Phillip Minns
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
 - ensuring teachers are more ambitious for pupils' progress and the quality of the presentation of their work
 - ensuring teachers provide activities which engage pupils' interests, challenge pupils to think hard, make decisions for themselves, and sustain their concentration throughout the lesson
 - making sure that teachers use information about pupils' attainment to plan work that is securely based on their previous learning and is adjusted to meet their varied needs and abilities
 - explaining to pupils what they are expected to achieve in lessons, how they will know they have been successful, and what they can do to aspire to higher levels of achievement
 - checking pupils' progress throughout lessons and adjusting the work if it is too hard or too easy
 - developing the skills of all adults in asking pupils questions that require them to think through their ideas and deepen their understanding
 - ensuring marking tells pupils how their work might be improved and they are given time to respond to teachers' comments and learn from their mistakes
 - clarifying the role of teaching assistants so that they support pupils effectively throughout lessons and promote their ability to work by themselves, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

- Raise achievement in speaking, reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school by:
 - providing pupils with a good range of opportunities to develop the vocabulary they need to communicate effectively with adults and each other and to enhance their writing
 - reviewing the programme for teaching the sounds letters make (phonics) so that pupils know how to read unfamiliar words successfully, and spell correctly
 - ensuring pupils make good use of the library to read books that are at the right level for them and read widely in different subjects
 - developing a clear programme for teaching mathematics that builds up pupils' knowledge and understanding and offers increasing levels of challenge as pupils move through the school
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn and remember their multiplication tables and number bonds
 - teaching pupils the written methods to calculate accurately and solve problems with confidence.

- Ensure that all pupils attend more regularly by working with parents and carers to reduce the number of holidays taken in term time.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, and build the capacity to improve by:
 - drawing up a plan for the long-term development of the school to raise aspirations and ambitions for pupils' attainment
 - revising the short-term improvement plan so it is focused sharply on the improvements needed to increase rates of pupils' progress, and checking that it is having the anticipated impact on pupils' achievements
 - reviewing the structure for the leadership and management of the school so that it is clear who is responsible for what, including the line management of the teaching assistants
 - developing the skills of the subject and key stage leaders so that they contribute fully to the improvement of the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement
 - putting into practice robust appraisal systems so that all staff are held accountable for their contributions to pupils' achievements
 - reviewing the curriculum so that it is broad and balanced and gives due attention to the development of pupils' skills in English and mathematics
 - providing a thorough training programme to raise the skills of all staff in teaching mathematics, the sounds letters make, spoken language and on how best to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 May 2014

Evidence

During this visit, the inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector considered all the areas for improvement as set out in the annex, but paid particular attention to the school's actions to improve the quality of teaching.

Context

Since the second monitoring visit, there have been some significant staff changes. The deputy headteacher and a teacher have left the school and another teacher is on maternity leave. The process is underway to appoint new teaching staff for September 2014. In the meantime, the school has taken on a number of temporary staff.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the inspection and last visit, achievement in the school has continued to improve. Current levels of achievement in Year 6 are significantly better than at the same time last year. Pupils have made rapid progress in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing in Year 6 is more difficult to assess because of previously inaccurate assessment information. Support from the local authority English adviser has helped to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment.

The proportion of pupils on track to achieve the required level in the Year 1 phonics assessment is significantly higher than in 2013. However, this is still too low, as around half the pupils will not move into Year 2 ready to access the next stage in their education. This is because the quality of phonics teaching is inconsistent and is not leading to pupils making the rapid progress that they need.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has continued to improve since the last monitoring visit. Most permanent teachers are demonstrating improved skills that are leading to more rapid progress for pupils. During the monitoring visit, teachers made good use of assessment information to plan activities that built on pupils' previous learning. In the best lessons, teachers checked pupils' understanding to ensure they made rapid progress. For example, during a phonics session in Year 1, the teacher actively probed pupils' phonics knowledge to ensure their learning was secure. By doing so, pupils were enabled to make rapid progress. When assessment information is not used as effectively, activities lack challenge and do not meet the learning needs of all pupils. This is particularly the case for less-able pupils and those with special educational needs.

Teaching assistants are not making a strong enough contribution to the quality of teaching. They are not clear about their roles, particularly when supporting phonics and pupils that need extra help. Phonics are not generally taught well. The inconsistent approach is preventing pupils from making the progress needed.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance has continued to improve since the last monitoring visit as a result of the range of ways the school has adopted to reduce poor attendance. For example, the breakfast club and minibus have improved the attendance of targeted pupils. Rates of attendance are currently higher than the national average.

Where teaching is effective and improving, pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to their work. When teaching is weaker, pupils lose interest in their learning and are easily distracted. Pupils treat each other with care. Pupils behave well around the school and report that staff take their concerns seriously.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and IEB continue to provide strong leadership. The departure of the deputy headteacher and changes to the membership of the IEB present challenges to the school. However, with the good support of the local authority, they have shown determination to secure strong leadership for the school. Both the IEB and the local authority closely monitor the school's action plans. Consequently, these plans are effectively driving improvement.

The headteacher continues to provide teachers with clear guidance and support. This is leading to improved outcomes for pupils, particularly in Year 1 and Years 5 and 6. However, plans currently in place to support interim and temporary teachers are not sufficiently focused on ensuring that all pupils are able to make good progress.

The temporary subject leaders for English are beginning to evaluate the current quality of teaching in phonics, reading and writing. They have already identified that pupils do not use and apply their phonics knowledge effectively when reading and writing. They have also started to evaluate the quality of teaching across the school. At the time of the last visit, the initiatives introduced to support the teaching of English were not monitored sufficiently well. Consequently, these initiatives did not lead to the teaching improvements necessary to enable pupils to make rapid progress in reading and writing. This is still the case.

The IEB receives information regularly about pupils' average progress and levels of achievement for some year groups. However, members of the IEB do not receive sufficient information on the progress pupils make in every class. Consequently, they do not regularly evaluate the quality of teaching in each class for reading, writing and mathematics.

External support

The school continues to benefit from the good level of support provided by the local authority. For example, the local authority has secured a temporary deputy, serving headteacher to support the school. It has strengthened the IEB through its new appointments. As a result, the IEB and headteacher appreciate the support they receive and recognise the positive impact on the quality of teaching.