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14 November 2014

Mr Mark Snow
The 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 12 and 13 November 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 fourth 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 the 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 the Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 November 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other staff members, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority. The school's survey of parental views was also taken into account.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, there have been further staffing changes. While the school seeks to appoint a new deputy headteacher, two teachers have taken on the role of acting assistant headteacher. The acting assistant headteacher with responsibility for Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage has been seconded to the school for the current academic year. The other acting assistant headteacher has been promoted internally. Three teachers have joined the school to replace those who were working on a temporary or a supply basis. One teacher is planning to leave the school at the end of the autumn term and another is returning from maternity leave. In addition, the senior leaders have restructured the team of learning support assistants, employed at the school.

To strengthen and complement the IEB, a new member has been appointed. One other member of the IEB is currently unavailable due to ill health.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The performance of the Year 1 pupils in the 2014 phonics assessment is a very positive development and shows an improvement on the 2013 results. However, whilst Year 1 girls performed very well with almost all achieving the expected standard, just over half the boys in the year group managed the same level of attainment. As yet, the school's results are still lower than the national average and further improvement is needed to ensure that all Year 1 pupils reach their potential.

Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 has remained well below average for the last three years. Very few pupils achieve the higher levels. Year 2 girls outperform boys in all areas. The attainment gap closed slightly in 2014 as boys managed to improve their performance, but girls' attainment was lower than that achieved in 2013. The in-school attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils also reduced in 2014, but it still remains too large.

In 2014, Year 6 pupils' attainment improved and was considerably higher than that achieved in the previous two years. However, pupils' attainment in mathematics, writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling remains well below the national average. Very few pupils reach the higher levels. Based on these figures, the Year 6 pupils' performance is about six months behind that of their peer group

nationally. As with younger year groups at the school, the Year 6 girls' attainment was higher than that managed by the boys. Girls are about six months ahead of the boys. This attainment gap is also apparent when evaluating the performance of disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils at the school.

Pupils' progress across Key Stage 2 last year was not fast enough. The rate of pupils' progress has not increased in recent years. As a consequence, the progress of all groups at the school is much lower than that achieved by pupils nationally.

Year 6 pupils with special educational needs are not reaching the standards expected. Overall, their attainment is well below similar pupils nationally, particularly in reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.

The evidence in pupils' work books shows that, since the beginning of this academic year, pupils in most year groups are now making better progress than in previous years. The quality of pupils' work completed recently is of a better quality than that produced at the start of term. Pupils are taking greater pride in their work as teachers increasingly make their expectations clear. This is helping pupils to understand the importance of setting work out neatly and completing work to a high standard. As teachers become more demanding in their expectations, pupils are enabled to make better progress consistently across the school.

The quality of teaching

Throughout this monitoring inspection, it was very evident that there is a strong determination to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers are increasingly challenging one another to drive up standards and increase pupils' rate of learning. Teachers are frequently planning well for the different ability groups that they teach, which ensures that work is better targeted at pupils' differing abilities. Consequently, pupils find the work interesting and appropriately challenging.

Teachers are delivering lessons that engage pupils well. They are planning activities that interest pupils and capture their imagination. Importantly, pupils are describing the lessons as being fun, which helps to improve pupils' motivation to learn.

Since the start of term, the quality of teaching has improved and become more consistent throughout the school. Teachers often remind pupils about the need to complete tasks within a set timeframe, which ensures that there is a certain rigour to lessons and an increased pace of learning.

The school's learning support assistants are increasingly contributing well to lessons, supporting and challenging pupils to complete their work. There is a strong emphasis on using questions effectively to encourage pupils to give a considered response rather than a simple yes or no answer. As the learning support assistants often work with the pupils that need extra help, this approach is useful at enabling pupils to talk through their understanding, which reveals where further work is required.

Since the marking policy was reviewed, teachers are paying greater attention to assessing pupils' work. This increased focus is evident in teachers' comments that help pupils to understand how well they have performed and where errors have been made. In some of the older classes, teachers mark pupils' work with a National Curriculum level to help them know the standard they have reached. As yet, teachers are not explaining frequently enough what pupils need to do next so as to improve the standard of work they produce.

As teachers are increasingly being held accountable for pupils' performance, regular opportunities are being scheduled into the school's programme when pupils' progress can be monitored. This is essential work that ensures staff can determine how well pupils are learning and what progress they are achieving.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well in school. They enjoy working and playing together. Relationships across the school are respectful. Pupils are polite and courteous. Importantly, there is a strong ethos of pupils being in school to learn. Pupils enjoy school and say that they feel safe and well cared for. They are confident that bullying is not an issue. Pupils speak positively about the recent appointment of older pupils who have been nominated as anti-bullying ambassadors.

The evidence from the school's recent survey of parents' views shows that most families describe pupils' behaviour as good. In class, pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils are attentive and they listen careful to instructions. Pupils work well individually, in pairs and in small groups. The work in pupils' books shows a growing pride in the quality of work being recorded.

As pupils' behaviour improves, the school is able to demonstrate a downward trend in the level of temporary pupil exclusions. Last year, there were very few temporary exclusions and, since the start of the autumn term, no pupils have been excluded.

As a result of the school's efforts, pupils' attendance increased last year to be broadly in line with the national average. This is a very positive outcome and acknowledges that the school's strategies of engaging with families are being successful. During this autumn term, attendance levels have dipped slightly from last year, which is due to a series of illnesses affecting many pupils. The school is also working hard to reduce incidents of pupils being late for school. Again, there is evidence to show that families are responding well to the school's initiatives as fewer pupils are arriving late.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The school's leaders have constructed a leadership team with the requisite expertise needed to take forward the school's improvement plan. The previous temporary staffing situation has largely been resolved with teachers being appointed on

permanent contracts. This increased level of stability with the teaching force provides pupils with greater continuity in the quality of teaching that they receive.

The school's senior leaders are focused on improving the school. They work well together, challenging one another in their efforts to find the best solutions. As a result, there is a strong sense of energy and purpose across the school. Staff are committed to the school's leadership and their vision for the future. Morale is high and there is a strong collegiate approach to further professional development.

The headteacher's strong and determined leadership is instrumental in developing the school's capacity to improve. He is innovative in seeking solutions to the challenges that the school faces, and he is able to make things happen that benefit the pupils. For example, he has negotiated access to a local sports facility that enhances the school's provision and provides pupils with additional indoor space for physical education activities.

The recent appointment of two acting assistant headteachers provides the senior leadership team with additional expertise and resource. Each has responsibility for leading the staff in their respective key stages and ensuring that pupils achieve well. They are also leaders for English and mathematics across the school. Work to strengthen the quality of mathematics teaching is well underway with, for example, the introduction of a calculation policy, which sets out what pupils will learn each year. Developments are not as advanced in English, as the postholder has only just been appointed to the school on a full-time basis.

The senior leader with responsibility for managing the school's special educational needs provision has a good understanding of current intervention initiatives. The post-holder's portfolio also includes responsibility for managing the staff who work with pupils supported by the pupil premium funding. At present, there is insufficient information available to explain how well these additional funds are enabling this group of pupils to make accelerated progress.

The school's leadership is committed to improving pupils' outcomes so as to prepare pupils ready for the next stage of their education. Appropriate targets have been set for pupils' achievement. The school is in the process of using its performance management systems to hold staff accountable for the progress their pupils make.

The school's predominant approach is to deploy learning support assistants to work with those pupils that need additional help and support. As yet, the school's leaders have not evaluated whether this is making best use of their expertise to enable pupils to make the rapid progress needed to reach the standards expected.

The IEB is fundamental to the school's improvement journey. It is very well led and the members are making a significant contribution to the school's development. The board meets regularly to monitor the school's progress, which includes receiving presentations from staff to explain how well recent improvement initiatives are working in practice.

The school has positive relationships with families. Parents have confidence in the school's leadership and appreciate the regular newsletters. The information on the school's website is reasonably comprehensive. However, as yet, it does not provide enough detail on some important areas, such as the curriculum that each year group will study.

The school's single central record is current and up to date. In line with national expectations, the school's leadership is currently reviewing its child protection procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. The headteacher, as the school's designated person for child protection, has completed the appropriate training to ensure that the school has the expertise required.

External support

The school continues to benefit from the external support being provided. As part of that support, the local authority engaged an experienced primary school leader to work with and support the school's improvement strategies. This appointment provided the headteacher and the school's IEB with valuable expertise as they introduced new initiatives to strengthen the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, pupils are now benefiting from higher quality teaching across the school and taking more care with their work. Local authority advisers are continuing to work closely with staff to help them develop the necessary skills to improve aspects of their work. The impact of this engagement is evident in that lessons engage pupils successfully and there is a strong emphasis on pupils making progress every day.

As the school continues to develop and increase its capability to move the school forward, the local authority is beginning to reduce the high level of involvement that was present earlier in the school's improvement journey.