

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 679 9166
Direct email: jayne.coleman@serco.com



19 June 2015

Moira Hunt
Uplands Junior School
Melbourne Road
Highfields
Leicester
LE2 0DR

Dear Mrs Hunt

Special measures monitoring inspection of Uplands Junior School

Following my visit with Jayne Ashman, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 17–18 June 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the Section 5 full 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 not making enough 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester.

Yours sincerely

Clare Cossor
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise the quality of teaching so that pupils consistently make good progress, by:
 - demanding all work in lessons from all groups of pupils, particularly the most able and those who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium
 - monitoring pupils' progress closely and adjusting the work set to speed it up, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - making clear comments on pupil' work in lessons and in their books to show them how well they have done and what to do to improve their work
 - always making the best use of teaching assistants to help pupils make rapid progress.

- Improve pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - encouraging pupils to develop their ideas, and helping them to speak fluently
 - focusing on improving pupils' skills in reading with fluency and understanding
 - ensuring pupils understand how to work out calculations
 - strengthening teachers' skills in teaching mathematics.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
 - when observing lessons, making rigorous checks on the impact of teaching on the progress different groups make
 - giving teachers clear and accurate feedback on the effectiveness of their lessons in improving pupils progress
 - providing suitable training, linked to specific targets, to improve the quality of teaching
 - improving the monitoring skills of subject leaders, particularly in analyzing data and using the results to bring about improvement.

Ofsted has made recommendations for actions on governance to the authority responsible for the school. An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 17–18 June 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and met with the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the former Interim Executive Board, the Chair of the Secretary of State's Interim Executive Board, and leaders responsible for English, mathematics, disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and child protection. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative from the local authority and met with a small number of parents. Inspectors observed work in lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and heard some pupils read. Inspectors evaluated a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, self-evaluation documentation and data relating to the attainment, progress and attendance of pupils.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, two new teachers have started at the school and one teacher has left. One teacher has been absent through illness. The interim headteacher leads the school for four days a week. A new interim executive board has been in place since 30 May 2015. A new leader for special educational needs started in February and the school now has a champion for disadvantaged pupils and a champion for reading. A new interim executive board has been in place since the beginning of June 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The achievement of pupils across the school in reading, writing and mathematics is not improving as quickly as it needs to. This was demonstrated during lesson observations, by talking to pupils and by looking at work in pupils' books. The school's own data shows that, although there has been some improvement in the rate of progress in reading across the school, that this is not the case for writing in all year groups. For mathematics, the pace of progress has slowed. School data also indicates that the average points score in mathematics for the current Year 6 pupils is lower than it was for Year 6 pupils in 2014. The attainment of Year 6 pupils in reading is higher than last year but the rate of progress has not been enough to counteract the previous years of underperformance. As a result, their outcomes are still below those expected nationally. The performance of pupils in Year 5 remains particularly poor. The current headteacher and school improvement officer acknowledge that the pace of improvement in the quality of teaching has not been consistent enough or fast enough since the last inspection to bring about the acceleration needed in progress and attainment.

Pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional support provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) are continuing to make good progress. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs

are also making good progress and this appears to be accelerating. This is a result of stronger leadership in this area and improved planning for individual and small-group teaching programmes.

All teachers now comply with the agreed systems for recording and tracking pupils' progress. However, this information is not being used consistently well enough to plan lessons that cater for pupils' different abilities. As a result, too many lessons still lack challenge for the most-able pupils and there are times when pupils are not being stretched or excited enough by their learning.

There are no clear systems for sharing learning targets with pupils, and this is hampering their progress. One higher ability Year 6 pupil told an inspector that if he asks how to achieve the next level in his work, the teacher 'does not give me the detail of how to do this'. Some classes currently have target cards for pupils; others do not. In classes which do have these cards, pupils told the inspector that, 'We don't use them much' and 'We haven't used them for a long time.'

A greater confidence and love of reading is now developing across the school. The work of the new reading champion is beginning to pay dividends. During this inspection, pupils were much more confident to talk about the different types of books that they were reading and about their favourite authors. These improvements are the result of the more focused approach to the teaching of reading across the school, the hard work of staff and the ongoing investment in the refurbishment of the library.

The quality of teaching

Standards in the overall quality of teaching have not continued to rise quickly or consistently enough since the last monitoring inspection. Work in pupils' books, conversations with pupils about their learning and the school's own documentation show that not enough teaching is good and that inadequate teaching has not been eradicated. The quality of teaching within year groups and individual classes is too variable. As a result, pupils are not always making the progress they should.

The vast majority of staff are now following the agreed marking code: using green markers to show that work has been done well and orange where corrections are needed. However, not all marking enables pupils to make good progress because not all teachers make it clear to pupils what steps they need to take next.

Examples of best practice include:

- teachers' comments which pose additional questions to extend and challenge pupils' understanding
- specific praise which motivates pupils and ensures that they understand exactly what they have done well
- clear next steps which give pupils confidence to take risks in their

learning.

Where marking is poorest:

- teachers' comments are written untidily and pupils have difficulty in reading and understanding what has been said
- there are occasions where teachers write in a sarcastic tone which undermines pupils' confidence
- teachers are not checking that pupils have understood or responded to their comments; in these instances, work is not improving quickly enough.

More opportunities are needed to develop pupils' speaking skills. In one Year 3 class, the teacher has created a climate where pupils' ideas are valued and risk taking in their work is praised. In this classroom, pupils were confident to explain their ideas to others; for example, about how to make the tastiest possible chocolate snack. In some lessons, however, teachers do not check pupils' understanding sufficiently. Some pupils are not able to express their ideas because they have not fully understood what is being taught, while others are not motivated to do so because the work is not interesting enough.

New groups and programmes which have recently been introduced to support pupils with mathematics seem to be showing some signs of good impact. The 'precision teaching' programme is being taught well by higher level teaching assistants but is currently being used with only a small number of pupils because not all staff have been trained yet.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Strong relationships between pupils and adults continue to make the school a caring place to work and learn. Throughout a challenging time, the majority of staff continue to model the highest sense of care and respect for one another and their pupils.

There is now a new system in place, CPOMs (child protection management system), which enables leaders and staff to record concerns and issues relating to child protection, attendance and bullying. The detail and accuracy of information recorded has improved significantly. However, although leaders have an up-to-date view of the current rates of attendance and instances of poor behaviour, they do not have a systematic approach to analysing the information to spot patterns and trends.

Pupils are confident to talk about the 'good to be green' behaviour system and understand what is expected of them, both in lessons and at playtimes. The majority of pupils behave well, are polite and friendly. However instances of poor behaviour still occur because too much teaching is not consistently good enough.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the last inspection, the interim headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders have remained committed to driving forward the much-needed improvements in the school. Systems for school improvement planning are better. There are fewer separate plans, and it is much clearer what actions need to be taken, who is responsible for them and the agreed time line. However, leaders do not consistently present information in the context of performance nationally or in comparison with previous years. This is a significant weakness as, on some occasions, it is contributing to an overly positive view of how well pupils are doing and is not helping to raise the expectations of all teachers.

Senior leaders and subject leaders regularly observe teaching and model best practice but these actions have not had the impact required to improve teaching at a faster enough pace. Too many teachers still do not have high enough expectations of the most-able pupils and their planning is not tailored enough to the particular learning needs of individuals. Systems intended to improve planning, including checks by leaders and opportunities for teachers to plan in year groups, are proving not to be effective enough, as much planning remains too weak.

A more-rigorous system for the performance management of staff is now in place and targets are clearly linked to the achievement of pupils and to school priorities. Teaching assistants and other support staff are now also included in the appraisal programme and targets have just been set for a group of higher level teaching assistants. It is too early to assess the impact of these recent changes.

The large majority of staff are working extremely hard and have supported the initiatives introduced since the last inspection to turn around the legacy of underachievement in the school. There is, however, a small minority of staff who have not 'bought into' the vision of heightened expectation, and this had an unacceptable impact on the pace of improvement across the school. Staff morale is not good. Some teachers told inspectors that they are anxious about the changing nature of the senior leadership team and feel overwhelmed by the amount of continual change.

Since the last monitoring inspection, between January and May 2015, the interim executive board has continued to work closely with school leaders in responding to recommendations from the external review of the pupil premium. The role of the pupil premium champion has become established and there is a much more strategic approach to the deployment of staff and resources. As a result, outcomes for these pupils are continuing to rise.

Minutes from interim executive board meetings show that members have been committed to offer both support and challenge to the current headteacher and to

senior leaders. They have been instrumental in securing a working partnership with a local outstanding school. It is too early to assess the impact of this work. They have not been afraid to ask probing questions and to hold leaders to account for the achievement of pupils. However, they have not always ensured that progress has been considered in the light of national achievement or had an accurate view of the achievement of pupils in individual subjects as well pupils' overall achievement.

External support

The local authority has continued to support the school, principally through the work of the school improvement officer. He has worked alongside the current interim headteacher to model best practice, in terms of both leadership and teaching practice. He has an accurate view of the fluctuating nature of the quality of teaching in the school and recognises the urgency of change needed to turn the tide of inconsistent levels of improvement in teaching and learning.