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3 October 2014

Mr Ashley Howard
Headteacher
Manor Infant School
Inverness Road
Portsmouth
PO1 5QR

Dear Mr Howard

Special measures monitoring inspection of Manor Infant School

Following my visit with to your school on 1 and 2 October, 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 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 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 Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring there is no inadequate teaching in Year 1 as a matter of urgency and ensuring good or better teaching for all pupils
 - improving the way undesirable behaviour is managed, and the teaching of classroom routines in Year 1
 - improving teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge, so that they have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure they always match learning tasks to the needs of all pupils
 - improving the teaching of reading and phonics in Reception and Key Stage 1 and giving the least-able pupils opportunities to read every day.

- Accelerate pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in order to ensure more pupils reach at least the levels expected for their age at the end of Reception and Year 2 by:
 - improving pupils' understanding of sounds and letters and their ability to use their skills when reading and writing
 - teaching pupils to form their letters correctly and teaching lower-attaining pupils how to write in sentences
 - providing consistent challenge for more able pupils in mathematics in Key Stage 1
 - increasing purposeful play activities in reading and writing in Reception and ensuring children are always sufficiently challenged.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance by:
 - taking a consistent and well considered stance to tackling incidents of poor behaviour
 - enlisting the help of specialist agencies to draw up personal behaviour improvement plans for pupils in most need and ensuring staff are trained to implement them
 - ensuring teachers are fully trained to implement the behaviour policy and that senior leaders closely monitor its impact
 - implementing clear and effective procedures, including working closely with families, to raise attendance rapidly.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels and the school's capacity to improve by:
 - revising management structures and systems so that roles and responsibilities are clear
 - ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels are held to account for the impact of their work in helping the school to improve

- rigorously checking the impact that teaching and subject planning have on pupils' progress, and taking quick and effective action to improve teaching and pupils' progress where needed
- developing whole-school planning for the teaching of phonics, writing and mathematics which promotes good progression of pupils' basic skills
- improving the skills of the governing body in holding the school's leaders fully to account for pupils' achievements, including linking teachers' pay to their performance.

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

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 October 2014

Evidence

During this monitoring visit I observed nine lessons, including seven jointly with senior leaders. I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, middle leaders and the members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). I also met with a representative from Portsmouth Education Improvement Service. I scrutinised school documentation including records of leaders' monitoring activity and minutes from the IEB. I spoke to pupils in lessons and scrutinised a sample of pupils' books from all year groups.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection five new teachers have joined the school, some in job-share arrangements. Two class teachers, both with responsibility for Reception classes, left in July. Three new teachers in Reception started in September, two in a job-share arrangement. Two class teachers in Year 1 left in July. Two class teachers in Year 1 started in September, one in a job share arrangement with an existing member of staff who has now taken on a class responsibility.

The IEB has appointed a shadow governing body; the shadow governing body is currently working alongside the IEB. Both the IEB and shadow governing body are exploring academy status under a sponsorship arrangement.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment is improving. More pupils are now achieving the standards expected for their age, particularly in mathematics and writing. Changes to the way writing is taught are enabling pupils to have more regular opportunities to write for different purposes. In addition, teachers correct pupils' basic spelling and punctuation errors more routinely. This allows pupils to learn from their mistakes and consequently make better progress. In mathematics, pupils now have regular opportunities to apply their skills to solve real life problems. However some teachers do not plan challenging enough problems for the most able pupils in their classes.

Standards at the end of Early Years Foundation stage are now broadly in line with the national figures; more children are now achieving a good level of development. Well-judged support from the local authority has enabled teachers to develop their skills and expertise more fully. Teachers and teaching assistants are using their observations of children to plan more challenging activities with increasing effectiveness. As a result, activities are building upon children's previous learning

experiences more regularly. Consequently, children are developing their skills appropriately and making increasingly good progress.

Pupils' understanding and use of, phonics (linking letters and sounds) is improving. More pupils are now achieving the standards expected for their age. Leaders have introduced more regular assessment activities and are able to review more often how pupils are responding. Consequently, there are higher expectations and pupils are progressing at a faster rate than in previous years. For example, in a Reception class, children were able to read confidently a range of words beginning with the initial sound 'a' or 's' and sort them accurately into groups.

Pupils' achievement in reading is not improving fast enough. Pupils achieve less well in reading than in mathematics or writing. This is because reading activities often lack purpose and challenge. In some sessions, pupils receive insufficient guidance and tasks lack purpose; when this is the case pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.

The quality of teaching

Since the last monitoring inspection the IEB has been successful in recruiting new teachers. Short-term cover arrangements ended in July and the new school year has begun with a full complement of substantive teaching staff. Senior leaders have rightly established clear expectations and there is now greater consistency than at the last monitoring inspection. For example, all teaching staff now mark work regularly and provide feedback to pupils using an agreed code. Consequently, all pupils who spoke to the inspector were able to identify strengths in their written work. However, some aspects of written feedback remain variable. In some classes, pupils do not respond or correct basic errors and then their progress slows. In the best examples, marking includes an additional challenge and pupils are given time to respond. When this is the case, pupils deepen their understanding and make good progress.

Teachers are now beginning to plan activities that vary in difficulty. However, these are not yet well-matched to pupils' starting points. Sometimes the lowest attaining pupils are not given the support they need to succeed; equally tasks are not always sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. When this is the case pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. Leaders are aware that more support is required to help teachers develop these skills so that all learners have purposeful activities that provide an appropriate level of challenge.

Teaching requires further improvement as teachers do not make it clear to pupils what they are learning and how success will be achieved. Pupils complete their tasks willingly but they do not always understand what skills and knowledge the teacher wants them to learn. Additionally, in some classes, teachers make superficial checks;

with too much focus on ensuring pupils are completing work, rather than checking on their progress and understanding during lessons.

Teaching assistants now contribute well to developing pupils' understanding. They effectively lead group activities and are developing skilled questioning that aids pupils' understanding. For example, in a Reception class, a teaching assistant skilfully questioned and prompted children to find and order the digits, one to ten. The children respond positively, enjoying these practical hands-on experiences. One Reception pupil declared enthusiastically at the start of his learning activity, "I am now ready to learn!"

Senior leaders continue to routinely monitor the quality of teaching. Teachers find this helpful. They gain useful feedback and advice on how to improve and develop their teaching skills. Leaders now need to make sure their monitoring is focused on accelerating pupil's progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance has continued to improve so it is above the national average. This is because school leaders have rightly placed a high priority on making sure all pupils attend regularly. Leaders now monitor pupils' attendance meticulously. This enables leaders to identify and support, at a very early stage, any pupil who is absent without explanation. As a result attendance for vulnerable pupils has improved significantly. Punctuality has also improved since the last monitoring inspection. This is because leaders have introduced well-judged reward systems which encourage punctuality. As a result, pupils are now keen to ensure that their class wins the award for most punctual class of the week and more pupils now arrive on time.

School leaders have continued to review systems for monitoring behaviour. Staff record incidents of poor behaviour in detail. Leaders now identify patterns and trends. As a result, the number of serious incidents has declined. In addition, pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties receive support, tailored specifically to their individual need. Now there is a much greater emphasis on balancing individual support alongside opportunities to be fully involved in class activities. As a result pupils are developing their social skills more fully and serious incidents are reducing.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the previous monitoring inspection the headteacher and deputy headteacher have continued to improve the school. There are stronger systems now for evaluating the impact of initiatives and leaders make changes more confidently, when necessary. For example, leaders modified the behaviour policy to place a greater emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour. Pupils are responding confidently to this and have a developing sense of pride in doing well. Pupils proudly showed

the inspector their stickers and reward charts for good work, talking animatedly about the new systems in place. As a result in many classes, pupils have a more positive outlook.

Systems for monitoring the progress of pupils are now much stronger, and there is regular recording of how well pupils are doing. Leaders, with support from local authority advisors, have provided regular opportunities for teachers to engage in moderation activities. They now know the information gathered about pupils' attainment is accurate. Leaders continue to track very carefully the progress of different groups of learners. They are now more analytical and respond more sharply to the information collected.

More teaching staff now have additional leadership responsibilities. They have received training to help them in their new roles. As a result more staff are involved with checking the quality of teaching and learning. Strategies to check include a regular cycle of activities that include looking at pupils' work and teachers' marking. As a result, leaders have established a more regular and robust cycle of monitoring activity. Although middle leaders have appropriate action plans, they are yet to analyse the link between improvement actions and pupils' achievement.

The school has implemented the new national curriculum and staff have received appropriate training. Leaders have paid particular attention to the curriculum for pupils' personal, social and emotional development. During the visit, the inspector observed pupils having regular and useful sessions related to learning behaviour. For example, in one session, pupils were able to identify, with increasing confidence, things that help them learn at home. Pupils are also developing confidence in wider aspects of school life; they are involved more regularly in discussions and decision making. For example, pupils who are the school's MPs – 'Members of Manor Parliament' enjoyed finding ways to improve the playground.

The IEB has met regularly and offered appropriate challenge to leaders through effective questioning and regular monitoring visits. A new shadow governing body has been established, made up of governors who bring a good variety of skills and expertise. They have held their first meeting alongside the IEB, set their terms of reference and established an appropriate committee structure. The vice-chair of the IEB chairs the shadow governing body; this will help to ensure a smooth transition. Both the IEB and shadow governing body have met with several potential academy sponsors. However, plans are at a very early stage and members and governors have taken no firm decision.

External support

The local authority provides good quality support for the school. It has brokered advisory support from Portswood Teaching Alliance which is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Year 1. The local authority has

ensured senior leaders are well-supported, brokering support from a Local Leader of Education. The school has also received helpful support from a National Leader of Education. A visit to a local outstanding school, to look at work in Year 2, was particularly worthwhile. Local authority advisors have led useful moderation meetings in all year groups. Leaders are receiving helpful training and also receive good quality advice from the local authority advisor.