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24 January 2013

Mr Graeme Garthwaite
Interim Headteacher
Cage Green Primary School
Cage Green Road
Tonbridge
TN10 4PT

Dear Mr Garthwaite

Special measures monitoring inspection of Cage Green Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 January 2013, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2012.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the consultant headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and other staff with leadership responsibilities. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

Context

The headteacher retired at the end of the autumn term and the deputy headteacher is on maternity leave. A seconded headteacher and a consultant headteacher were appointed by the local authority to lead the school full time from January 2013 until the end of this academic year. Three other members of staff – the Inclusion Leader and two class teachers – left at Christmas. The vacancy for the Leader of the Centre

for Autism has been advertised and is being covered by the special educational needs coordinator with support from staff at the adjoining special school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Appropriate actions are under way to set the school on the path to improvement. Since their arrival, the interim headteacher and consultant headteacher have made a positive impact on staff morale. There is no shortage of commitment from leaders, staff and governors to the hard work ahead. The formation of staff into four 'learning teams' has set a clear way ahead for improving communication and discussion about pupils' progress, for building the capacity to improve, and for making staff accountable for the impact of their work. The leaders of the learning teams are new to their roles and will need much support to carry them out. Reviews of pupils' progress have begun but it has become clear that existing information about the levels at which pupils are working may not be accurate. It is essential that an accurate starting point is established quickly as a foundation for setting future targets.

The draft school action plan, written by the new leaders, is still evolving. It needs some reworking to make it shorter and sharper and to align it more closely with the local authority's statement of action. Nonetheless, the actions are the right ones and the plan has clear targets for increasing the rate of pupils' progress and raising their attainment. The role of governors in checking that actions are having a positive impact is not as clear and precise in the plan as it could be.

Governors have had some training, and further support, including mentoring, is planned. New governors bring a range of skills and expertise to the role. A programme of visits to the school is helping governors get first-hand information. They say they feel better informed and so are able to ask more questions of leaders. Governors are determined to ensure parents and carers are kept fully informed of developments.

The local authority's statement of action outlines a high level of support, some provided directly and some commissioned from a number of local schools. Officers moved quickly to provide stable leadership during the autumn term until the appointment of the interim headteacher. The local authority has set up robust procedures to check that the support it is providing is having the intended impact and to challenge the school's leaders and governors about the quality of provision.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector