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13 June 2013

Ms J Szymonowicz and Ms S Rowe
Interim executive headteachers
Epworth Primary Academy
Birchfield Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN9 1DL

Dear Ms Szymonowicz and Ms Rowe

Special measures monitoring inspection of Epworth Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 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 academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim executive headteachers, the deputy headteacher, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives from the local authority. The governing body's statement of action and action plan, the academy's improvement plan and a number of supporting documents were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2013, the headteacher and one class teacher have resigned. The academy is currently led by two interim executive headteachers, who have been in post for approximately three weeks. Two new senior leaders have been appointed for September 2013 with responsibility for special educational needs and literacy. Three new governors have joined the governing body.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since their recent appointment, the interim executive headteachers, building on the work of the substantive deputy headteacher, have worked swiftly and have started to tackle the key areas for improvement. Actions taken to date include: the introduction of a monitoring programme, including lesson observations and the scrutiny of teachers' and pupils' work;

the development of a more robust tracking system to monitor pupils' attainment and progress and accurately identify where intervention is required; targeted professional development for staff; the introduction of focused reading strategies; a full staffing review, with a proposed new staffing structure; and the introduction of a 'parents' panel'.

Senior leaders have also started to review and amend the academy's improvement plan, which now includes specific timescales and indicates how often the academy's work will be checked. However, overall, this work is at an early stage of development.

The governing body's action plan includes success criteria, actions to be taken and personnel responsible for monitoring improvements, notably the academy's 'progress team'. This group includes governors, senior leaders and local authority personnel. However, the plan does not explicitly indicate what the academy's expectations are for improvement over time and how regularly the impact of the academy's work will be measured. There is currently no action plan in place for the next academic year, 2013/2014.

The governing body has brokered an external review of governance, as recommended at the previous inspection. This is due to take place during the summer term and will be led by a National Leader of Governance. However, overall, there has been no significant change in the limited effectiveness of the governing body since the previous inspection. The governing body has yet to make a decision on the headteacher position from September 2013.

Although Epworth has academy status, senior leaders work in partnership with the local authority. The local authority has provided effective support to the academy, notably working with the governing body in the appointment of the interim headteachers, funding additional visits by the school improvement partner, providing governor training on assessment data, and advice on long-term financial planning. The academy is also working with a number of local academies, including South Axholme and Westwoodside. The Chair of the Governing Body and an assistant headteacher from South Axholme Academy have recently joined Epworth Academy's governing body.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The governing body's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The academy's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for North Lincolnshire, and the Department for Education Academies Adviser Unit. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Headon
Her Majesty's Inspector