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Matthew Dews
Headteacher
Grove Primary School
Caledonia Road
Wolverhampton
WV2 1HZ

Dear Mr Dews

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grove Primary School

Following my visit with David West, Additional Inspector, to your school on 15–16 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 2–3 July 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 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton.

Yours sincerely

Chris Malone

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all pupils make good progress, by ensuring that:
 - assessments of pupils' progress are always accurate and are used more effectively to provide a high level of challenge in lessons
 - teachers regularly ask pupils questions in lessons to make them think hard, to check that all groups are making at least good progress, and to adapt teaching where they are not
 - pupils' targets in reading, writing and mathematics are understood and used by pupils to check how well they are doing
 - marking and feedback always tell pupils how to improve their work, and teachers give them opportunities to respond
 - teachers regularly plan opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - using information about pupils' progress more effectively to identify where improvements are needed and to set more challenging targets
 - making sure that all leaders effectively check the quality of learning in their areas of responsibility and use this information to improve the quality of teaching
 - analysing attendance information fully to identify where it needs to be improved and creating plans to ensure that this happens
 - involving the governing body more in checking how effectively plans to improve teaching are having a positive impact on pupils' progress, and in developing stronger links with parents and carers.

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 second monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 July 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with: the headteacher; school leaders; staff; groups of pupils; parents; a representative from the local authority; the headteacher of the supporting school; the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor. Inspectors observed teaching in all 14 classes, listened to pupils read, and scrutinised pupils' work.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, one teacher has left the school and two classes are being taught by temporary teachers. The school is at an early stage in preparing to become an academy.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Despite an improvement in results in mathematics, the school is likely to be below the government's minimum standard again in 2014 in the end of Year 6 national tests, when results are validated. Pupils are about to leave Year 6 an average of two terms behind their peers in other schools in reading and mathematics and a year behind in writing.

Pupils are still not making enough progress in writing in all year groups. In Years 4 and 5, pupils do not make enough progress in reading and mathematics. Standards across the school in reading, writing and mathematics are still too low. Older pupils are not sufficiently aware of what they need to do to succeed. They cannot explain what they should do if they are stuck in their work. They are hesitant in explaining the purpose of their lessons, talking about the activity rather than the skills that they are learning.

Of particular concern are the standards reached by pupils eligible for additional funding (pupil premium). In Years 4, 5 and 6, these pupils are not catching up quickly enough from low starting points because the school is not providing effective additional support specifically for them. Inspectors saw discouraging comments from teachers in books, which led to poorer work by these pupils.

Inspectors observed pupils working closer to the levels typical for their age in Year 1, as a result of increasingly better teaching and good questioning by adults. More pupils than in the previous year reached the last published expected standard in the phonics check (the sound that letters make). However, less-able pupils do not use

these phonic skills confidently to work out how to read unfamiliar words in their reading books.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has not improved since the previous section 5 inspection because school leaders have not followed up training for staff with sufficient rigour. Teachers do not consistently assess pupils' work accurately, although they do now use records on individual pupils to note down progress during lessons. Teachers write detailed plans that set out what they want different groups of pupils to achieve in lessons. In some cases, when all groups are working at the same activity, teachers still fail to notice when pupils are not making progress.

Teachers do not explicitly link the aims for lessons with pupils' recorded targets. As a result, pupils are not regularly reminded of what they need to do to improve their work, and are not helped to develop skills systematically.

When pupils write in subjects other than English, teachers do not correct basic errors. Marking does not, therefore, help pupils enough to improve their writing skills across subjects. Teachers praise incorrect work without indicating how spelling or choice of vocabulary can be corrected and improved.

Although pupils are now given time to respond to teachers' comments in books, those comments are not often linked to what each pupil should do next in learning in order to make better progress. Consequently, the time given to correcting work is not used effectively to develop pupils' skills, particularly in writing.

In one literacy lesson observed, adults helped pupils to reflect on the effectiveness of a text by asking questions that made pupils think hard about the use of adjectives. However, effective questioning by adults was not seen in all lessons. Pupils respond to poorly worded questions with one-word answers and are not helped to develop spoken fluency or deeper understanding of the skill or concept being taught.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the monitoring visit, pupils showed a clear understanding of classroom routines and talked about their school with pride. They generally behave well around the school and in lessons.

The school does not have an effective overview of bullying and racist incidents and so does not check if individual pupils are repeated perpetrators or victims of bullying. Pupils say that bullying, including the use of racist language, occasionally happens.

Despite the lack of a systematic overview by school leaders, pupils say that adults deal with bullying well.

The school attendance officer now follows up some poor attendance more rigorously, but school leaders do not analyse attendance information fully. Attendance has, therefore, not improved since the last section 5 inspection. It is still below the latest national average. As the attendance of pupils eligible for additional funding is below that of their classmates, they miss more learning and are less likely to catch up.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

School leaders have not addressed the weaknesses identified in the previous section 5 inspection with sufficient urgency.

The headteacher still holds an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching. The targets set for the standards that pupils are expected to reach are not sufficiently challenging. Reports for staff and governors are, therefore, misleading.

Despite regular lesson observations by senior leaders, and much training for staff, inspectors saw limited improvements in the quality of teaching. School leaders have not checked on how effectively training is implemented and not all teachers use the recommended techniques in the classroom.

Subject leaders are starting to check the quality of learning in their subjects across the school. There are improvements in the teaching of literacy in Key Stage 1. The acting coordinator for special educational needs uses school data on pupils' progress well to help her to decide which actions will quickly improve teaching for these pupils. However, not all teachers implement recommended strategies well. The headteacher avoids tackling teachers' underperformance and, as a result, inadequate teaching remains and pupils continue to underachieve.

Governors ask school leaders challenging questions about teaching quality and pupils' achievement. However, as governors are not receiving accurate information on the school's performance, their challenge to leaders is not accurately directed and does not result in improvements. They do not know whether the government's additional funding (pupil premium) enables eligible pupils to make faster progress, or how the funding is spent. The school's website does not comply with requirements to publish information about the use of the funding. This means that parents cannot check how the funding is used, or if it is benefiting the right pupils. Eligible pupils are prevented from receiving well-directed support to succeed in their education because school leaders and governors do not ensure effective use of the funding. Better use of additional funding is a priority. At the next monitoring inspection, the school's compliance with requirements for monitoring this funding will, again, be checked thoroughly.

There have been substantial delays in achieving a useful review of governance. The governing body does not have an effective committee system to check the quality of teaching and learning. This prevents the governing body from holding the headteacher to account for the school's performance. For example, governors say that they have asked the headteacher about the impact of additional funding many times, but they have not followed through to get an acceptable answer. As a result, eligible pupils have continued to underachieve.

Governors agree that plans to develop stronger links with parents and carers are at an early stage and that there is more work to be done to help parents to support their children with learning at home. These delays mean, for example, that opportunities for pupils who do not read confidently to read borrowed books at home are still too limited.

School leaders do not ensure that there are effective systems to keep pupils safe. Different explanations were given to inspectors by the headteacher and staff about which pupils were attending an alternative local education provider on the days of the inspection. On further investigation, two pupils who registered at the school in the morning were not signed out properly. Inspectors confirmed with the local provider that the pupils were safe.

The local authority is here charged to conduct an urgent and thorough check of the school's compliance with all safeguarding requirements, and a review of the safeguarding of pupils, with particular reference to pupils who are educated off-site. The impact of the school's systems for safeguarding its pupils will be a priority at the next monitoring visit.

External support

The local authority has organised regular and substantial support from another local school. This has not resulted in the rapid improvement needed to start to overcome the entrenched underachievement of pupils. School leaders have not ensured that changes to teaching practices are made quickly. The local authority accurately reviewed the school's progress as inadequate in May 2014 but did not tackle inadequacies in governance robustly enough. The local authority, school leaders and governors are not working effectively together to find a long-term solution to improve the school. Progress towards the school becoming an academy has been delayed.