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Mrs Susan Gill
Executive Headteacher
George Hastwell School
Moor Tarn Lane
Walney Island
Barrow-in-Furness
Cumbria
LA14 3LW

Dear Mrs Gill

Special measures monitoring inspection of George Hastwell School

Following my visit to your school on 8 September 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 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 April 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, a teacher with additional leadership responsibility, a classroom teacher and a consultant headteacher. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

Following the retirement of the substantive headteacher, an executive headteacher has been appointed on a part-time and temporary basis. The full details of this appointment are yet to be agreed between the relevant parties. A consultant headteacher has also been appointed, on a part-time and temporary basis, to assist

the executive headteacher for one day each week. Four other members of staff, one teacher and three teaching assistants, have left the school since the inspection. Leaders have implemented temporary arrangements to manage the reduction in staff numbers. The executive headteacher plans to review the school's staffing structure before replacing those staff who have left since the inspection.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

At the time of the monitoring inspection the executive headteacher had been in post for fewer than two weeks. She has taken swift action to raise expectations through effective modelling of good practice, for example, in terms of how she expects sixth-form students to behave at break times. Although it is too early to see the full impact of the executive headteacher's initial involvement with the staff, there is an eagerness and willingness, among those spoken with, to improve the school.

A school action plan to address the areas for improvement identified in the inspection was produced prior to the appointment of the executive headteacher. The plan is not sufficiently detailed nor does it give a clear indication of how the impact of actions will be measured or monitored. The school's action plan should be reviewed urgently so that time is not wasted on actions which do not, or will not, have an impact on increasing significantly the rates of progress made by pupils at the school.

Leaders have not taken swift enough action since the inspection to improve the quality of teaching or the quality of support provided by teaching assistants. Formal lesson observations by leaders have not taken place since the inspection and, as a result, neither teachers nor teaching assistants have received constructive feedback on how to improve their teaching. Raising the quality of teaching across the school must be made the number one priority in order to raise the achievement of all pupils.

Leaders have not taken effective steps to ensure that the school is safe and one which promotes learning at every opportunity. A small number of areas within the school, such as the classroom used for art lessons, are clean and well organised and provide an area where pupils can learn effectively. However, too many other areas of the school are cluttered with disorganised and unused equipment. These areas are at best a distraction from learning and at worst a health hazard to pupils who are susceptible to infection. Specifically, the cooker used by pupils to prepare food in food technology lessons and a room used to change by some pupils should not be used until they have been subject to a deep clean. Leaders must take immediate action to ensure that all rooms and corridors are clean, free from unnecessary clutter and appropriately decorated, so that no opportunity is missed to stimulate learning.

Leaders must also take immediate action to ensure that the school site is as safe as possible by introducing systems to manage effectively, entry and exit on to and off the site and into and out of the school building. During the monitoring inspection the inspector observed an unlocked external door along with a number of open gates allowing unchecked access on to the site and into and out of the school building. Current procedures are not sufficiently robust to ensure, as far as is reasonable, the safety of pupils while in the school.

The governing body has not yet commissioned an external review of governance. A review of the school's use of pupil premium has taken place but the findings of the review had not been presented to the governing body at the time of the monitoring visit. Immediate action must be taken by the governing body to ensure that the review of governance takes place, along with the production of a suitable action plan, before the next special measures monitoring inspection. The governing body should also produce an action plan to address any areas for improvement identified in the review of the school's use of pupil premium.

The local authority has produced a clear statement of action in order to support the school. The statement has not yet begun to have an impact in terms of improving the achievement of pupils, due to the delay in appointing the executive headteacher. The local authority has been effective in brokering additional leadership support for the school, for example, by securing the recruitment of a consultant headteacher for one day each week. The local authority's statement of action is linked closely to the school's action plan and, as a result, it requires further refinement in terms of how actions will have an impact on the rate of progress made by pupils.

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 not 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 Acting Corporate Director of Children's Services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely,

Drew Crawshaw
Her Majesty's Inspector