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Mrs Sheila Todd
The Executive Headteacher
Drapers Mills Primary Academy
St Peter's Footpath
Margate
Kent
CT9 2SP

Dear Mrs Todd

Special measures monitoring inspection of Drapers Mills Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 21 October 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 June 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you and the heads of school, the deputy chief executive officer of the proprietor, The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT), the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) who also chairs the TKAT board of directors, and TKAT's executive governor for the Thanet region who is a member of the IEB. I evaluated the proprietor's statement of action and the academy's action plan. I examined a range of academy documents and you led me on a complete tour of the school, including some lessons.

Context

Since the inspection the previous headteacher has left. A new executive headteacher was put in place from 1 September 2014 who is a TKAT regional director of education. Two heads of school were also appointed and began work on 1 September 2014. The governing body was replaced with an interim executive board on 17 July 2014. There have been a large number of changes to the staff since the inspection. Fifteen members of staff have left the academy, including four out of the

six newly qualified teachers who started at the beginning of the academic year. Fifteen new members of staff have joined.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The executive headteacher and the two heads of school have acted decisively since September to address some of the inspection's findings. No action had been taken before the summer holiday except the removal of the governing body and the formation of an IEB. Senior leaders are rightly challenging the low expectations that teachers have of pupils. In September, they assessed rigorously what each pupil knows and can do with a series of tests. Consequently, leaders at all levels are better able to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress because they now have more accurate information. Senior leaders have made this information available to teachers to help them plan lessons which are better matched to pupils' abilities. Senior leaders have also put in place a more robust system for checking pupils' progress. There are some early signs that this is beginning to raise pupils' achievement. Senior leaders walk through the school daily, checking the quality of teaching and standards of pupils' work. They talk with interest to pupils about their work and pupils are increasingly keen to show what they have been learning. As a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are improving in many lessons. Senior leaders are rightly providing training for teachers in order to improve teaching.

The areas for improvement arising from the inspection have been addressed simply in a combined statement of action and academy action plan. This document does not give sufficient detail about how the required improvements will be made. Leaders' vision of what the academy will be like in a year's time is not set out. The reasons for proposed changes to staffing and leadership, including when these changes will be completed by, are not clear. Targets have not been set to raise the standards pupils achieve in order to reverse the underachievement of the past. Too often the success criteria are simple statements about how much progress pupils will have made in total.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the task ahead and the things they need to do first; they know that these are not expressed adequately in planning documents. They are developing better ways of evaluating actions taken. They are sharpening their focus on improving the way they analyse the achievement of different groups of pupils and how they strengthen their judgements of the quality of teaching.

The IEB is now holding leaders to account through fortnightly progress checks. The board's executive governor visits the school weekly to ensure that the pace of improvement is increased. Now that the IEB is aware of the scale of the challenges faced by this academy, it is promising significant investment to support the executive headteacher to drive improvements.

The subject leadership of English and mathematics is not yet having sufficient impact on pupils' progress in writing or mathematics. There remains too much inconsistency in the progress pupils make. For example, in some classes, boys still do better than girls and, at times, some pupils who have English as an additional language do better than their classmates whilst others lag well behind. An emerging group of existing middle leaders are beginning to correct this by working with teachers on their planning, giving examples of how to teach particular lessons, how to show pupils ways to improve their work and using wall displays so that pupils can practise writing.

The proprietor has recently made available an additional team of skilled teachers to support the academy. This team has shown teachers how to deliver more effective lessons on phonics (the sounds letters make), how to help children learn letters and numbers in the early years more quickly, and how to support better learning within lessons of pupils who have English as an additional language. Gradually this intensive work is beginning to improve outcomes in a majority of classes. Pupils are learning more now, but their performance still does not compare well with their peers nationally.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The academy's action 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector