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Rashida Sharif
Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy
Elliot Street
Nechells
Birmingham
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Dear Mrs Sharif

Special measures monitoring inspection of Nechells Primary E-ACT Academy

Following my visit with Suha Ahmad, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12–13 November 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 in January 2014. 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.

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

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 Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that all teachers:
 - take account of what pupils already know, understand and can do when planning activities, especially for more-able pupils and those who are disabled and have special educational needs
 - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the quality of work that pupils produce
 - provide pupils with the precise guidance they need to improve their work.

- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that pupils:
 - spell correctly, use grammar and punctuation appropriately and write legibly
 - have the opportunity to solve more difficult mathematical problems
 - have regular chances to use and extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills and knowledge in different subjects.

- Ensure that all leaders and managers:
 - have the skills needed to check carefully the quality of teaching and pupils' learning
 - have the expertise required to help teachers improve their teaching
 - use information about pupils' achievement to check carefully how well different groups of pupils are learning
 - take prompt action once weaknesses are identified in teaching and pupils' learning
 - make sure that pupil premium funding is helping pupils who are eligible for this additional support to make good progress and reach higher standards in all year groups.

- Make sure that governors develop their skills so that they can ensure that leaders and managers help pupils make good and better progress.

An external review of governance and the academy's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim principal, senior leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the sponsor. Inspectors observed parts of lessons and carried out a book scrutiny. A range of documents was scrutinised, including action plans, information about progress made by pupils, attendance records and records showing how the academy cares for its pupils and keeps them safe.

Context

Since the last inspection, three class teachers have resigned and two have been appointed on a temporary basis. A temporary vice-principal has recently begun working at the academy and an executive principal appointed with effect from 1 December. Six teaching assistants have left the academy and seven appointed on a temporary basis. One senior leader has resigned and the office manager is on long-term absence. There is a vacancy for a Year 6 teacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The standards pupils reach are inadequate and have declined further from the previous year. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 is low, and particularly so in mathematics. Pupils do not make enough progress during their time at the academy. For example, at the end of Year 6 in 2014, only just over half of the pupils made the progress they should in mathematics and two thirds in reading and writing. Progress for all groups is poor, especially for boys and disadvantaged pupils.

Current data held by the school remains inaccurate for all year groups except Year 6. Senior leaders do not have confidence in the assessments teachers make. This means that there is no clarity about how well pupils are currently doing. As a result, teachers do not pitch their teaching at the right level and pupils make very little progress in lessons. Work in the current Year 6 show standards are expected to decline again further this year.

The progress of particular groups is a significant concern. Leaders have collected information about how well groups of pupils perform. However, there is no evaluation of pupils' performance and very little to show how problems will be rectified. As a result, this underperformance largely goes unnoticed. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not perform well. For example, less than a quarter made the progress they should in reading and less than one in ten made expected progress in mathematics. Equally worrying is the progress made by the more able. Only one in ten of these pupils made expected progress in reading and writing, and none made enough progress in mathematics.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching remains inadequate. Class teachers have not received enough support or challenge to help them improve. As a result, teaching is not strong enough to help pupils catch up on previous underperformance. Teachers have not had the opportunity to observe good practice and inexperienced teachers are not working with good role models. There is a lack of effective accurate monitoring of teaching and learning, and teachers have not received structured advice on how to improve their teaching. Poor teaching has not been tackled and leaders have done very little to improve the quality of teaching.

As current assessments on pupils' performance is inaccurate, class teachers have a lack of understanding of where to pitch pupils' learning. As a result, teaching is weak. This is characterised by:

- teachers having low expectations of what pupils can achieve
- tasks that do not support pupils to make progress: tasks given to pupils are often either too easy for some or too hard for others
- poor behaviour by some pupils because they are not focused on their learning
- a weak curriculum that does not meet the needs of learners
- a lack of focus on improving pupils' basic skills.

Time has been devoted to improve the quality of teachers' marking. Generally, this is much improved and most pupils receive guidance on how to improve their work. However, often pupils do not respond to the advice given to them and, as a result, pupils' work does not improve quickly enough.

Staff and pupils' relationships are a strength. Generally, pupils respect teachers and staff know pupils well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is deteriorating. This is because teaching is not sufficiently meeting catering for pupils' different abilities and they lose interest in their learning. In some cases, pupils show a lack of respect for some teachers because they do not listen when teachers are teaching.

Incidents of poor behaviour are recorded. However, this information is not analysed and evaluated. As a result, leaders do not have a strategy for how to improve behaviour over time.

Attendance rates have improved. Leaders are working well with parents to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. Fixed-term exclusions have reduced, along with persistent absenteeism. However, this has not had a positive impact on behaviour around the academy.

Pupils told inspectors that some incidents of poor behaviour happen in the playground. They reported some instances of fighting, name-calling and swearing. There have been two racist incidents so far this term. However, despite this, most pupils say they felt safe in school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders do not have the capacity to bring about improvements and inadequate progress has been made since the academy was judged to require special measures. Poor decisions have been made and ineffective action is preventing the academy moving forward. The senior leadership team is not improving teaching and learning and they are leaving inexperienced and temporary teachers floundering. Some key stakeholders believe the academy is in a worse state than when it was originally judged to require special measures.

A few staff have performance management targets for this year. There is great confusion about targets to manage teachers' performance. There have been no review meetings to evaluate how effectively teachers have worked. Very few staff have job descriptions, leaving a lack of clarity about what is expected and leading to a lack of accountability.

Some safeguarding procedures are a significant concern. Recruitment procedures are lax at best. A senior member of staff was appointed on a temporary basis to the academy without the completion of an application form and was interviewed by the interim principal, who was not suitably trained. Both the governors and the sponsor allowed this key appointment to be made without their involvement.

As there is a vacancy for a Year 6 teacher, a decision has been made to teach English and mathematics to these pupils at the local outstanding secondary school. This means that Year 6 pupils are taught by eight different teachers every week, leading to a lack of stability and continuity. However, pupils say that teaching at the secondary school is good and is helping them to learn.

Social, moral and spiritual and cultural development is weak. Year 6 pupils do not attend any acts of collective worship. This contravenes the academy's policy for collective worship.

The local governing body oversees three E-Act academies. It has undertaken an external review of its work and devised an action plan to how to improve. The Chair is skilful and knowledgeable. However, a decision has been made to demerge the governing body. Consequently, it is unclear how the governing body will operate next term. This adds to the fragility of the leadership of the school.

External support

Although E-Act has been involved with the academy and has taken some action in an attempt to improve outcomes and provision, there is no evidence of positive impact of change for the better. For example, the sponsor recently organised for Year 6 pupils to be taught English and mathematics off-site. Although they now receive better teaching in these subjects, it has caused a disruption to their day and is not a long-term solution.

Since the academy was judged to require special measures, E-Act has employed a variety of strategies but none have yet resulted in any measureable improvements in the academy. The sponsor has not secured good teaching and they have allowed ineffective leadership to continue. They have not held leaders to account sufficiently and, as a result, the academy is slipping further into decline. While E-Act's overall evidence agrees with inspectors' views of inadequate, some recent visits from the sponsor's representative are far too optimistic. For example, in November 2014, behaviour was judged to require improvement and to be improving. Currently, behaviour is inadequate.