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Ms Sally James
Acting Headteacher
Grove Primary School
Caledonia Road
Wolverhampton
WV2 1HZ

Dear Ms James

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grove Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2–3 December 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- The Secretary of State

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 third monitoring inspection on 2–3 December 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders, three members of the governing body including the new vice chair, members of staff, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. The acting headteacher and two other leaders conducted joint lesson observations with the inspector. A book scrutiny of Year 4 work was carried out.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit the headteacher has been on sick leave from the second week of September. The deputy headteacher is acting headteacher and the assistant headteacher has just been appointed as acting deputy headteacher. From the beginning of November an Executive Headteacher from a local school has been appointed to work with the school's leaders three days a week until January. A new special educational needs coordinator was appointed from September. There are two teaching vacancies, in Reception and Year 4, and a maternity leave cover from November, also in Year 4. The Early Years coordinator has been absent on sick leave since the second week of term. The Chair of the Governing Body resigned in September and was replaced by the vice chair. She has now resigned as well and left the governing body in November. The previous chair, who had stepped down to vice chair in September, has taken over as chair again. The governing body is significantly depleted, with vacancies for half of its positions. There are no parent governors.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in the most recent unvalidated tests and assessments at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 remained significantly below the national average. However, there were improvements in all subjects at both key stages and overall attainment of pupils rose. At Key Stage 1 pupils eligible for the pupil premium outperformed their peers in their school but were still below the level of pupils nationally. At Key Stage 2 the gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils remained significantly wide. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level of development for their age by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage was still well below the national average.

The progress pupils made from the end of Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 also improved and is no longer significantly below the national average. However, the progress of particular groups, including lower attaining pupils, White British pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, remains too slow. The proportion of pupils making the expected two levels of

progress in reading, writing and mathematics from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 was below the national average. The school did not meet the government's floor targets for attainment and progress in 2014.

From lessons seen and scrutiny of pupils' books it is evident that too many pupils are not making enough progress in their learning. Too often work set is not pitched at the right level, leading to some more able pupils getting bored and lower attaining pupils getting stuck. Staff absence and turnover has also contributed to disruption in pupils' learning, especially in Year 4. Pupils are making better progress in Year 6 where learning is faster because of a greater pace and challenge in lessons. Senior leaders are aware that previous school assessment data were inaccurate and are working closely with the school's partners to ensure current progress data are more precise.

The quality of teaching

Much of the teaching over time either requires improvement or is inadequate. In too many of the lessons seen all pupils were set the same or very similar work, which did not reflect their different starting points. Where there were different tasks set for different groups, pupils sometimes had to wait to hear explanations for work that was not relevant to them.

Expectations were too low for higher attaining pupils particularly in mathematics. Pupils who could comfortably add up single and double digit numbers were not stretched to take on more challenging questions. Elsewhere in another lesson groups of pupils found a mathematics challenge too hard and boys especially began to disengage from their work. Higher attaining pupils made faster progress when, for example, in literacy, they were set more challenging questions to check they understood the difference between similes, metaphors and personification.

The pace of work is generally too slow and at times the over-use of partner talk slows learning down rather than enhancing it. Not all pupils are involved when they are given the chance to take part in spoken activities. In some lessons intended learning outcomes did not match the tasks pupils had to carry out.

At times teachers showed a lack of subject knowledge in science and mathematics which led to pupils developing misconceptions about their learning. Not enough use was made of displays that could have supported pupils' learning had they been encouraged to refer to them. There was some evidence of pupils applying their literacy and numeracy skills in science but as yet this area remains under-developed.

In lessons observed additional adults usually allowed pupils time to work on their own or with others, but at other times they intervened too much. The role of additional adults was not always clear from lesson planning when they moved from table to table to support pupils.

Older pupils in Year 6 understood how well they were doing and what they need to do to improve from the targets they have been set, but pupils in other year groups were not so sure. Where target sheets were not consistently updated by teachers pupils did not know how well they were doing.

Marking in books is not sufficiently developed. There were too many instances of brief praise or occasional negative comments, where pupils were not given an indication of how they could improve their work. Where additional tasks or questions were set by teachers in marking there were too many instances where pupils responded but teachers did not acknowledge this in their subsequent marking. At worst pupils had wrong work marked as correct. Some adults' marking also featured spelling mistakes. There were examples, particularly in older pupils' work, of teachers responding to pupils' additional comments and answers.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

No misbehaviour was seen in lessons during the visit. Relationships between adults and pupils and between different groups of learners were generally positive. However, there were too many instances of low level disruptive behaviour, for example, pupils taking part in off-task conversations, fiddling with equipment or simply switching off. Pupils generally wanted to learn and, when they were set challenging and interesting tasks, they responded positively.

Pupils spoken to reported that behaviour has improved this term. They said senior leaders and teachers are stricter which they thought was a good thing. Leaders have put tracking procedures in place to check where and when behaviour incidents occur and to look for patterns of repeat offences. They also recognise that pupil voice is underdeveloped and that the school council does not currently meet.

The latest school data for this term to date show that as yet there has been no increase in the overall rate of attendance. Additional time has been acquired this term for regular fortnightly visits by the education welfare officer. The school has set up monitoring procedures to track the most persistent absentees. It has had some successes with individual families where data show improvements in attendance following the introduction of parental contracts.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders are relatively new in their posts following the headteacher's illness. They are working more closely as a team with middle leaders but have not taken enough responsibility for leading aspects such as pupil premium, attendance and, until recently, safeguarding. Most leaders are now observing lessons and checking work but not all of them are yet able to lead by example in their own teaching to improve the quality of the teaching of others. Support and challenge for teachers

rely to some extent on external support. In jointly-observed lessons leaders were able to identify strengths and key areas for development but previously they have been over-generous in their assessment of teaching.

The school does not meet all its statutory duties for special educational needs. Leadership is new and remains underdeveloped. The newly appointed coordinator is not qualified as is required although training has been scheduled for the New Year.

Leaders do not check marking sufficiently nor ensure that teachers are keeping target sheets up to date to ensure pupils have been moved to the next level of challenge when ready. Too many of the targets were out of date and too many target sheets had not been used this term by teachers.

Statutory safeguarding requirements are not all fully met. The school responded to the recommendation of the last monitoring visit by undertaking a safeguarding audit in November which has highlighted a number of issues which need to be addressed as matter of high priority. The acting headteacher has now taken on the role as designated safeguarding lead, with another senior leader as second designated officer, and training is ongoing. The school is working hard to address other areas identified. Shortcomings for arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision have now been resolved by changes in procedures although no pupils are currently attending offsite provision.

Tracking of the progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language has been improved. Leaders have ensured that initial assessments are carried out in a timely manner and that pupils' progress is regularly checked. Arrangements for tracking whole-school behaviour have also been put in place.

The recent external review of the governing body has indicated shortcomings in governors' ability to fulfil their statutory responsibilities, for example, for special educational needs, safeguarding and the pupil premium. Turbulence in the leadership and vacancies on the governing body mean that they are not able to carry out their role effectively to support and challenge the school. Individual governors are at very different stages in their knowledge and understanding of what is going on in the school. The governing body has not been able to recruit any parents or carers. It has limited capacity to challenge the school's plans to improve teaching and pupils' progress.

The school does not currently have a website online. The previous one was taken down by the acting headteacher as it was out of date and unfit for purpose. A new one has been designed but is not yet ready to go live; governors were unaware of this.

External support

The local authority is providing extensive support and challenge to the school. Minutes of the project board improvement group give clear indications of the local authority's expectations of the need to see rapid improvements. The local authority has supported the school to improve its action plan to ensure it is fit for purpose. Regular half-termly reviews are held to monitor progress. The local authority has brokered support with a local successful school that has recently started to provide support and challenge in all areas including the appointment of a temporary Executive Headteacher. This has had an immediate positive impact on the morale of leaders and teachers and provided additional short-term capacity for the school's developing senior leaders.

Priorities for further improvement:

- The school should ensure that it meets all its statutory safeguarding and special needs requirements by the time of the next monitoring visit in the spring term 2015.