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Mrs Michelle Hooper
Headteacher
West Heath Primary School
Rednal Road
Birmingham
B38 8HU

Dear Mrs Hooper

Special measures monitoring inspection of West Heath Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20–21 January 2015, 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 November 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection. This teacher should be appointed to a year group containing a teacher that delivers good or outstanding lessons and whose pupils make expected or better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve teaching so that none is inadequate and much more is good or better by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations and are precise about what they want each group of pupils to learn and how they are going to check how successful they have been
 - make accurate use of information about what pupils already know and can do to plan work which challenges all groups of pupils and helps learning to move at a brisk pace
 - develop secure subject knowledge for the teaching of mathematics
 - use time more effectively in lessons so that pupils spend more time actively engaged in, and making decisions about, their own learning
 - plan lessons that excite pupils and engage their curiosity
 - use teaching assistants and other adults more effectively, so none of their time is wasted, and check that their support is helping pupils to make better progress
 - use marking to inform pupils about how well they are doing against their targets and what they need to do to improve their work.

- Raise standards in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring that the teaching of phonics (letters and their sounds) is more closely matched to pupils' abilities and moves learning on more quickly
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and develop the skills of writing at length in different subjects.

- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - improving leaders' understanding of how much progress pupils should make in order that suitably challenging targets can be set
 - improving the accuracy of school self-evaluation by rigorously analysing all available information
 - implementing more rigorous checks on teaching that focus on how successful teachers are at moving learning on and how they can improve their practice
 - working closely with parents and carers so that they are better able to support their children's learning
 - improve governance by ensuring that members of the governing body are better informed about the school's performance and can use information to set more challenging targets for improvement
 - arranging an external review of governance to include a specific focus on the school's use of pupil premium funding.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 20-21 January 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, your senior leadership team, the Chair and members of the Governing Body and spoke to two representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with the middle leaders who have responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, Years 5 and 6, literacy, phonics (the sounds letters make) and numeracy. I observed parts of lessons across all year groups including the early years. During these observations I looked at the work in pupils' books and spoke to them about their learning. The behaviour of pupils was observed as they arrived at the school, at break and lunchtimes, as they left the school premises at the end of the day and in lessons. The views of parents were considered through the 70 responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, I reviewed the data that the school has on pupils' progress and attendance. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including the governors' minutes of meetings, the minutes of the local authority's monitoring task force, the findings of the 'supporting school improvement review day' commissioned by the local authority and the vetting checks on staff new to the school.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection two teachers and one teaching assistant have left the school. These posts have been filled by one teacher new to the school and a returning teacher. There are two new members of the middle leadership team who have responsibility for literacy and phonics. The deputy headteacher has recently taken responsibility for the leadership of numeracy and mathematics.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The attainment and progress of pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 in 2014 was significantly below that of pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap between disadvantaged and other pupils in the school, and nationally, widened in writing and in English grammar punctuation and spelling. In reading, the gap widened compared to other pupils in the school but remained at a 12 month gap compared to other pupils nationally. In mathematics, the gap between other pupils in school closed to six months but widened to 18 months when compared to pupils nationally. At the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2), West Heath Primary School pupils attained better results than pupils nationally in writing and mathematics and were in-line with the national average in reading.

Information provided by the school shows that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making better progress than at the same time last year, especially in literacy and mathematics. The early years leader has rightly identified

that children make less progress in personal, social and emotional development, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

Most of the pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 are making the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. The improvement in pupils' reading is particularly marked due to the use of a commercial phonics programme which was introduced in October 2014. This programme is well delivered by teachers and teaching assistants and effectively monitored by the leader with responsibility for phonics.

The school's information on pupils' progress shows that the large majority of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making expected progress, or better, in reading, writing and mathematics. However, a minority of pupils in Year 3 are not making the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 4, while the majority of pupils are making the progress expected in reading and writing, only a very small minority of pupils are making the progress expected in mathematics.

In Key Stage 1 and Year 4, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school is less than four months in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in Years 3, 5 and 6 the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in school is eight months in reading and writing. There is a similar gap in mathematics in Years 3 and 5 but in Year 6 the gap is 12 months.

The quality of teaching

The teaching of phonics, reading and writing continues to improve. The phonics programme is well delivered by teachers and teaching assistants who have all had specific and appropriate training. As a result, most pupils throughout the school are developing the ability to read and speak fluently and to better understand what they have read. Pupils have numerous opportunities to write for extended periods of time in English and in topic lessons, such as history. These increased opportunities and the effective teaching of phonics has resulted in most pupils improving their writing skills.

The teaching of mathematics is inconsistent. Where it is effective, teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils need to know, do and understand. As a result, they plan and provide learning opportunities that enable pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. Equipment and resources are used appropriately and help pupils to better understand mathematical concepts. Checks of pupils' understanding are frequent and the feedback provided to pupils helps them to improve their work. However, where mathematics teaching is less effective, pupils' learning is not well-defined by the teacher. As a consequence, the delivery of the lesson is muddled and pupils are unclear about what they are learning and what they need to do. The recently purchased mathematics resources are not used carefully enough to improve pupils' understanding. Many pupils do not have secure

basic arithmetical skills. As a result, they are unable to confidently solve simple problems. The work in the majority of pupils' books shows that they have few opportunities to reason mathematically, to problem-solve or to deepen their understanding. They do not have a secure understanding of how and why mathematical and arithmetical methods work. The marking of pupils' work focuses on issues such as presentation and does not help them to consolidate or improve their understanding. Pupils' lack of understanding and misconceptions are missed which results in mistakes being repeated.

Teaching assistants support pupils' learning effectively. They do this by encouraging pupils to think for themselves and to be resilient when encountering problems. Teaching assistants deliver the phonics programme confidently and successfully. The majority of pupils in their groups make the progress expected of them in reading and writing.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour continues to be a strength of the school. Improvements in pupils' attendance have been sustained and the number of pupils who are persistently absent, missing 15% of lessons, continues to fall. The majority of teachers have established a positive learning environment in which pupils feel safe and flourish academically and socially. The majority of pupils say that the wide range of break, and lunchtime activities have helped them to channel their energies and to develop their social skills, such as taking turns and sharing.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and senior leaders have maintained their high expectations for pupils' learning and progress and for improving the quality of teaching. They quickly challenge underperformance and provide intervention and support for pupils not making the progress expected of them. They equally challenge teachers who are unable to secure the best outcomes for pupils. As a result, some teachers have left the school and there have been changes to the middle leadership team.

Year leaders and the subject coordinators for literacy and phonics have been in post since September 2014. The mathematics coordinator has recently been changed and this subject is now led by the deputy headteacher. Middle leaders are motivated, enthusiastic and committed to the headteacher's vision to provide the best possible education for children. They have implemented actions to check the work of teachers and the progress pupils make. However, these systems are in the early stages of development. Middle leaders' analysis of pupils' progress lacks rigour. As a result, plans to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress lack a clear focus on the priorities for improvement, for example those needed in the teaching of mathematics. Middle leaders' action plans do not have clear goals, specific dates to

indicate when actions and checks are to be completed or milestones against which pupils' progress can be measured.

Since the last monitoring inspection visit, governors have received training delivered by the local authority. As a result, the governing body is much more active in questioning leaders about the performance of teachers and the information they receive about pupils' progress. Governors carry out their statutory duties effectively, including those for safeguarding and finance. As a consequence, safeguarding arrangements are secure and meet statutory requirements.

The number of responses on Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, Parent View, has increased since the last inspection. An increased proportion of parents are happy with the teaching, care, support and encouragement their children receive. The school's own questionnaire given to staff in January 2015 shows that staff are overwhelmingly supportive of school leaders and understand what the school is aiming to achieve. However, a few teachers feel that school policies are not applied consistently.

External support

The local authority provides effective support for teachers and school leaders primarily through the Colmore Partnership Teaching School Alliance. The local authority has commissioned reviews of the school's provision and these have accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Members of the governing body said that the recent training they received from the local authority was valuable in helping them to better carry out their role in challenging and supporting the school leaders. The local authority regularly monitors the work of the school through the Monitoring Task Force. They have also provided financial support to reduce the school's financial deficit.

The school works in collaboration with a number of other primary and secondary schools in the area, for example The Meadows Primary School and Queensbridge School.