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Mrs Penelope Webb
Headteacher
ARK Rose Primary Academy
Tees Grove
Kings Norton
Birmingham
B38 9DH

Dear Mrs Webb

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of ARK Rose Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 20 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in May 2014. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Academic Advisers Unit at the Department for Education, and the Director of Primary Education for ARK Schools.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate all pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons, especially more-able pupils
 - ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are provided with the support that they need to enable them to make as much progress as their classmates
 - teaching pupils to form letters correctly so that they write more fluently and confidently
 - consistently demonstrating high expectations for pupils' work
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides children with precise advice to improve their writing
 - developing teachers' knowledge in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that they can plan appropriate activities for children to practise what they have just learnt.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - employing a staff team of permanent teachers and teaching assistants
 - ensuring a robust induction for newly appointed subject leaders so that they quickly take responsibility for their areas of expertise
 - ensuring that better provision is made to help those who are behind to catch up
 - building the knowledge and confidence of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader so that the academy is consistently able to offer good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes
 - communicating improvements in the academy effectively to parents
 - ensuring that provision for the small minority of pupils whose behaviour remains challenging matches their needs and enables them to be successful in their learning and make accelerated progress
 - developing the academy library so that pupils have access to a better range of materials
 - reducing late arrivals so that no pupils arrive at the academy late unless for a legitimate reason.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 January 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, members of the senior leadership team, and middle leaders for English and inclusion. The inspector held telephone conversations with the ARK Director of Primary Education (academy sponsor), and an educational consultant. Jointly with the headteacher, the inspector observed eight lessons and undertook a reading and writing learning walk. Documents summarising actions introduced since the section 5 inspection were also reviewed, including the review of governance and reports by ARK consultants.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, a new member of the senior leadership team has been appointed as well as a lead teacher for the early years. One Year 3 teacher has left but has not yet been replaced.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and senior leaders have continued to consolidate the initiatives which they had begun to introduce at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. They provide teachers with stronger leadership, combined with higher expectations and rigour in holding teachers to account. New middle leaders demonstrate that they have a good understanding of their roles and they use assessment information well to sharpen their planning. The academy's central data tracking is now more rigorous and is used more accurately by teachers to assess the abilities of pupils and to track their progress more tightly so that any extra support for individual pupils can be provided quickly.

The emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning means that most pupils are making better progress in English and mathematics, but there is still some way to go to close the gap in attainment in most year groups. Year 2 remains a problem for the academy, and here both progress and attainment continue to be stubbornly below the academy's and national expectations. Despite its best efforts, the academy has not yet been able to employ a staff team of permanent teachers, and this is slowing down the pace of improvement. The process by which teachers track the progress of different groups of pupils has been strengthened and this has tightened up the process for setting and reviewing pupils' targets. Pupils for whom the academy receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for disadvantaged students) are making the same progress as other pupils.

Senior leaders are monitoring the quality of teaching closely and they regularly make short visits to lessons. They have developed a detailed and rigorous set of criteria for judging the quality of lessons. The headteacher's evaluations of the strengths and

weaknesses of teaching jointly observed on the monitoring inspection agreed with those of the inspector.

An external review of governance and the academy's use of pupil premium funding has been undertaken. The governing body has responded well to this, and it is clear that it has a much better understanding of what is being done to improve teaching and address underperformance as well as how effectively the pupil premium is used. Governors are developing their link roles well and are in a much better position to understand, and interrogate, reports made by the academy at meetings of the governing body.

Strengths in the academy's approaches to securing improvement:

- The academy's marking policy is being developed well so that all books and folders now have evaluation stickers in them which indicate, on a regular basis, how well pupils have done and teachers' further comment on how pupils can improve their work.
- There has been a very strong focus on improving attendance and punctuality. Figures show significant signs of improvement. Persistent absences and exclusions have also been reduced. Parents are kept well informed about pupil attendance and the adverse impact of absence on achievement and progress.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning has been strengthened well by the introduction of individual improvement reviews for all teachers. These reviews link areas for development closely with assessment information and help identify any training needs so that teachers are given good opportunities to improve their teaching.
- Teachers at all levels have been trained to interpret, and use more accurately, the wealth of assessment information now available for them to increase the rate of progress that pupils make. All teachers have this assessment information readily available in their classes. This assessment information is in the process of being strengthened further through more rigorous tracking of the impact of extra support given to pupils.
- The academy now has a fine library which is beginning to be used by teachers to support improvements in reading and topic work.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Although lesson planning has been strengthened, it does not identify clearly how more-able pupils are to be challenged further with more difficult work. Some plans identify how these pupils will be supported in their learning, but this is not the case in all instances.
- Teachers do not always probe pupils' understanding sufficiently with their questioning. They sometimes accept too readily the answers which are given and do not encourage pupils to provide deeper explanations to extend their thinking. Sometimes, teachers provide pupils with answers before the pupils have had time to think them out for themselves.

- Many more pupils are now reading and writing more fluently than at the time of the section 5 inspection, but teachers often scaffold written work tasks in such a way that pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to extend their written answers or develop discursive writing skills. This is especially the case for more-able writers.
- The mathematics programme is helping to improve pupils' mathematical skills, but some teachers demonstrate a lack of understanding of what generates deeper mastery of skills and concepts to ensure more rapid improvement.

External support

The academy has further strengthened its already strong link with a successful local ARK Primary Academy whose headteacher, acting as executive headteacher of ARK Rose Primary, provides it with much valued support. The ARK network lead consultants provide the academy with good support for English, mathematics and early years. An independent consultant has enabled the academy to improve its review and evaluation of the quality of teaching. The independent consultant who undertook the review of governance also provided the governing body with sound advice about how to keep the academy under review. In turn, this has helped the ARK senior consultants to build on their own good support for improving the academy.