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6 February 2015

Mrs Tina Dunkley  
The Headteacher  
Palfrey Junior School  
Dale Street  
Walsall  
WS1 4AH

Dear Mrs Dunkley

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Palfrey Junior School**

Following my visit with Rowena Green, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 February 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 fourth 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 two newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. These teachers should be appointed to a year group containing a teacher whose pupils make expected progress, or better, 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 Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be at least good by ensuring teachers:
  - assess accurately pupils' learning in order to plan and adapt lessons that match their abilities
  - have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the more able
  - provide a brisker start to lessons and deploy teaching assistants more effectively to support pupils' learning
  - provide activities that better hold the interest and attention of pupils
  - correct pupils' mistakes in punctuation, spelling and basic grammar consistently.
- Raise achievement in mathematics and in writing by ensuring that:
  - pupils are fully challenged in the tasks they are given and are provided with suitable opportunities to investigate and learn for themselves, particularly the more able
  - pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
  - pupils are provided with ample opportunities to practise and develop their basic skills in grammar, punctuation, spelling and writing at length across a range of subjects
  - pupils are taught basic mathematical concepts so they can reason logically and solve mathematical problems
  - gaps in attainment are closed rapidly for pupils supported through pupil premium and for those with special educational needs when compared with other pupils in the school.
- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
  - the governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, especially the achievement of different groups of pupils, and provides rigorous challenge that effectively holds senior leaders to account
  - the governing body reviews regularly all required statutory policies
  - leaders at all levels consistently check on the quality of teaching and provide feedback that helps teachers to improve their lessons
  - leaders are more effective in sharing the good practice that exists in the school
  - senior leaders use accurate assessments to track the progress of different groups of pupils in order to identify and tackle any underachievement and hold teachers to account for the progress of the pupils in their classes.

An external review of governance should be undertaken, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 February 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and a large number of pupils' books, met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, the Chair and members of the IEB and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered. Inspectors observed parts of lessons across all year groups. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils 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. In addition, inspectors reviewed the information that the school has on pupils' progress and attendance. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including the vetting checks on staff new to the school, the IEB's minutes of meetings and the findings of the local authority's audits of the school's use of the pupil premium grant (additional government funding to support disadvantaged children) and the school's procedures to ensure children are kept safe and secure.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, in November 2014, the acting headteacher has been appointed as the substantive headteacher. Four teachers, including the acting deputy headteacher, have left the school. This post has been filled by an existing member of staff. The leadership team structure has been revised and the new posts have been advertised. At the time of this inspection, three out of six classes in Year 4 and Year 5 were being taught by supply teachers. Pupils were not in school on the first day of this inspection due to a staff training day.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Information provided by the school shows that most of the pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 are making the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 3 and Year 6, most pupils are reaching the expected levels in reading. However, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is less secure. The school is aware of this and is providing appropriate intervention for pupils not making the expected progress.

Pupils' reading skills in all year groups are being well developed as a result of effective teaching and appropriate intervention for those who have reading difficulties. As a consequence, pupils' reading ages have increased considerably. For example, in two terms, pupils of Bangladeshi heritage improved their reading by two years and two months and, in Year 4, pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant improved their reading age by one year and eight months. Across all year groups, disadvantaged pupils improved their reading at the same rate as other pupils. The

gap between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and that of other pupils in writing and mathematics is closing in all year groups.

The progress of the most-able pupils is inconsistent across the school. In Year 4 and Year 5, a large majority of the most-able pupils are making expected progress, or better, in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in Year 3 only a small minority of the most-able pupils make the progress expected of them across all subjects. In Year 6, a large majority of the most-able pupils make expected progress in reading and writing. However, only a minority make the progress expected of them in mathematics.

### **The quality of teaching**

Information provided by the school and evidence from the work in pupils' books show that a large majority of pupils have teaching and feedback from teachers that help them to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding, particularly in reading. The teaching of reading and writing continues to improve. As a result, most pupils throughout the school are developing the skills to read and speak fluently and to understand what they have read. Pupils have opportunities to write longer pieces of work in English as well as in topic work, for example in geography.

The teaching of mathematics, however, is inconsistent. The work in the majority of pupils' books shows that pupils have few opportunities to reason mathematically, to problem solve or to investigate why mathematical and arithmetical methods work. The school has recently introduced 'problem-solving Friday'. However, this approach has not been in place long enough to result in sustained improvements in pupils' ability to reason mathematically. The marking of pupils' work does not always identify pupils' mistakes. As a result, a minority of pupils repeat the same errors.

Where teaching is most effective, pupils have work and guidance from teachers that consolidate and extend their knowledge and understanding. This is achieved by providing pupils with the opportunities to find things out for themselves or to use and apply what they know. However, in a minority of classes, pupils do not have enough opportunities to broaden and deepen what they know and can do. In addition, a minority of teachers do not provide subject specific feedback that enables pupils to improve their work.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' behaviour continues to be a strength of the school. Relationships among pupils and between staff and pupils are positive. Pupils have high expectations of themselves and others to behave well. As a result, the number of incidents of low-level disruption and fixed-term exclusions is low. Staff overwhelmingly agree that pupils are safe at the school and that behaviour is consistently well managed. Most staff believe that pupils' behaviour is good.

An overwhelming majority of staff believe that the school deals effectively with bullying. When asked, almost all pupils agree that there are few incidents of bullying and that these are quickly and effectively dealt with by staff. Pupils' attendance is broadly average. However, the number of pupils who are persistently absent, missing 15% of lessons, is just above average.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The headteacher actively promotes high expectations for pupils' learning. She has implemented appropriate actions to secure improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, especially in reading. As a result, the vast majority of staff say that they are clear about what they are trying to achieve as a school and that the school provides appropriate training to improve their performance, for example in the teaching of literacy.

The headteacher recognises that some policies, for example the marking and assessment policy, are applied inconsistently by a minority of staff. She and other school leaders are taking prompt action to challenge teachers who do not meet the school's expectations.

Pupils' progress, attendance and attitudes to learning are frequently monitored. As a result, there is a wealth of information about pupils' learning, absence and behaviour. However, a minority of leaders do not routinely analyse this information. As a consequence, they miss opportunities to identify and resolve issues such as pupils not making the progress expected of them in mathematics in certain classes.

Members of the IEB have a good range of knowledge and skills and use these appropriately to provide challenge and guidance to the headteacher and other leaders. The IEB has successfully resolved a number of staffing issues and supported the headteacher in restructuring the leadership team. The IEB has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The members have ensured that the pupil premium grant is used effectively. As a result, pupils eligible for this funding have improved their reading skills and are closing the gap on other pupils especially in Year 4 and Year 5. The IEB responded quickly to issues raised in the local authority's safeguarding audit and ensures that statutory requirements are met. The majority of statutory policies are regularly reviewed and approved. However, the child protection policy, while meeting requirements, does not fully reflect the school's cultural and racial mix.

### **External support**

The school works effectively with a range of schools and education consultants to improve the quality of leadership and management and pupils' progress. Park Hall Junior School supports the headteacher in generating and implementing policies. Blackwood School provides training for teachers on how to cater for more-able mathematicians. Ryders Hayes Teaching School provides guidance and support to teachers on marking and feedback. The local authority provides effective support for

teachers and school leaders through the improvement adviser. The local authority has carried out audits of the school's safeguarding procedures and spending of the pupil premium grant.