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27 February 2015

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

Dear Mrs James

Special measures monitoring inspection of Grove Primary School

Following my visit with Lisa Morgan, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25–26 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 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 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 25–26 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and checked arrangements for safeguarding pupils. They met with the acting headteacher, the executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the business manager, the Acting Chair of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority, the director of education of an academy chain, and groups of pupils. The acting headteacher and another senior leader conducted joint lesson observations with the inspectors. A book scrutiny was carried out of Year 4 work in literacy, numeracy and science.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the headteacher, who had been absent on sick leave, resigned in December 2014. The time allocation of the executive headteacher has been reduced to half a day a week in anticipation of the school converting to an academy in March. This arrangement, which had been due to finish in December 2014, has now been extended until the end of March 2015. One Year 3 teacher has been moved to Year 4 following the appointment of a Year 3 teacher from January 2015. There still remains supply cover for four posts, including two teaching vacancies, a maternity leave and the long-term sickness of the early years coordinator. Two teachers are leaving at Easter 2015. The Chair of the Governing Body has resigned and a representative from the local authority has taken over as Acting Chair. Plans to convert to academy status on 1 March 2015 have been postponed until 1 April.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Recent achievement data on the progress pupils have made since September indicate that not enough pupils are making sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils on track to reach the expected level for their age in reading and writing has fallen since the summer term 2014. The school is behind its targets for Year 6 for the end of Key Stage 2. A booster group has been established in Key Stage 2 to raise the proportion of pupils reaching the highest possible levels in mathematics, but this has only very recently started.

Pupils eligible for the pupil premium in Year 6 have not made as much progress as their peers since the start of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, the gap in attainment is widening. Eligible pupils currently in Year 2 have not made as much progress as their peers since the start of Key Stage 1 in reading and writing. The gap in attainment has remained the same in mathematics, where they have made the same progress as their peers.

Achievement data was confirmed in classroom observations, where pupils were making insufficient progress in seven of the fifteen lessons seen. In a small

proportion of the lessons seen, pupils made good progress as result of work targeted at the right level. The extent to which the most-able pupils, disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language made sufficient progress was dependent on how well teachers set work at the right level of challenge in relation to their different starting points. In too many lessons, this was not the case and therefore these groups did not make enough progress.

Pupils made the best progress when teachers made regular checks through the lesson as to how they were doing and asked open-ended questions of identified pupils that elicited whether or not they had understood the work.

The quality of teaching

Too much teaching over time is inadequate or requires improvement. Where too much time is spent on the same activity, pupils begin to switch off and lose focus. Similarly, where the same task is set at the same level for all pupils, it is too easy for some who finish quickly and then have to wait to be told what to do next. For others, who find the work too difficult, they are not able to respond to written tasks. Where pupils new to learning English as an additional language are unable to read the text or do not understand the key vocabulary, they become stuck without support. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, inspectors saw instances of children wandering aimlessly which were not picked up by the adults present.

Where teachers' questions are open to volunteers who have their hands up or to those who call out their answers, this prevents others pupils from participating. Consequently, teachers do not know if those without their hands up have understood the work. At their best, questions are pitched at different levels of difficulty and then teachers identify who they want to answer and modify the next part of the lesson according to the answer that the pupil gives.

Additional adults are very busy in lessons and use their time fully to support and challenge pupils with their learning. However, their role on lessons plans is not clear. In one instance seen, the teaching assistant had specific objectives to work with a pupil with special educational needs and this enabled him to make good progress in his learning in numeracy. Elsewhere, support is generic and not focused towards identified pupils.

Lesson planning does not routinely take account of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, those learning English as an additional language and those eligible for the pupil premium who may require focused support.

Teachers' planning indicates details of the level and sub-level each pupil has achieved and the level they are aiming towards. Pupils know these very well but are less sure how to reach the next step in their learning.

There are still too many instances of marking in pupils' work where teachers have set pupils additional tasks or questions but the pupil has either not responded or has given an answer and the teacher has not indicated that they have followed this up.

Teachers and adults have good relationships with pupils who, in turn, are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and apply the behaviour code consistently.

Pupils have the opportunity to practise their literacy and numeracy skills – for example, in science – but pupils with weak literacy skills struggle to access the work if the literacy demands of the tasks are not pitched at the right level.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils were well behaved during the inspection in lessons and around the school. They are willing and enthusiastic in lessons but, at times, are too much passive recipients in lessons. Almost all pupils spoken to said they enjoy all their lessons. Any instances of low-level disruption seen were when pupils had switched off because they found the work either too easy or difficult, or where they had remained on the same task for too long and had lost concentration.

A new scheme called '3B4ME' has been introduced to encourage pupils to develop other ways of finding information than going straight to the teacher. This is not yet fully established as there were still instances in lessons where pupils got stuck and promptly put their hand up to wait for the teacher to come or, if they had finished, sat patiently until they were told what to do next.

Pupils take responsibility for the newly established school council, chairing meetings and setting their own agenda. They have recently proposed an international day, drawing on pupils' different backgrounds, which is to take place later in the term.

Younger pupils spoken to said that behaviour is generally good and that there are no instances of bullying. All pupils spoken to said they feel safe and that they knew and understood the sanctions for behaviour. Older pupils, however, said there were some boys in Key Stage 2 who misbehave and get into fights and that sanctions against them and rewards for good behaviour were not effective enough. Inspectors did not see any evidence of misbehaviour during the inspection.

Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding have had their attendance targeted through a 'spotlight' programme. Overall attendance figures are published in a weekly newsletter to parents which highlights the most successful class attendance. However, so far, strategies to raise attendance have had limited impact

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders have had limited impact in securing improvements. Inspectors saw examples of lessons where teachers had received support and challenge and, consequently, the rate of progress had improved. However, these were the exceptions rather than the rule. Overall there has not been an improvement in the quality of teaching, and too much remains inadequate.

Too many of the senior leaders are not able to lead by example in the quality of their own teaching and marking. Although leaders are involved in the regular observation of teaching and scrutiny of marking in pupils' books, there is little evidence that this has led to consistent improvement. Staff absence and ongoing teacher vacancies have led to pupils experiencing ongoing disruptive changes in teaching staff, especially in Year 4.

There has been some progress in checking the accuracy of assessment of pupils' work with a local primary school, but arrangements for conducting this within the school are still limited. This means that too many pupils are still set work at an inappropriate level of challenge. When senior leaders took part in individual lesson observations, they could accurately judge the strengths and weaknesses of a lesson. However, they have an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching over time in the school.

Senior leaders' knowledge and analysis of pupil achievement data remains at a very early stage of development and they are too reliant on external support to provide the information. Consequently, the targets set for pupils are not based securely enough on leaders' and teachers' knowledge of the levels pupils are working at. No consideration has been given yet to life without levels under the new curriculum. Similarly, leaders have not been responsible for producing action plans for their areas of responsibility.

Leaders have not yet conducted an evaluation of the school's expenditure of pupil premium funding and the impact of specific initiatives and additional staff. Most of the funding has been deployed to top up existing staffing and support initiatives open to all pupils, and it is not targeted specifically at the pupils for whom it is intended.

Arrangements for safeguarding have been revised to ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements. The identity of the designated child protection lead and deputy are clearly displayed in school. The designated lead has received the required training. Arrangements to respond to critical incidents are in place, although the policy has yet to be completed. During the inspection week, the school held a safeguarding week with pupils to highlight the importance of staying safe.

Governors have been further depleted by more resignations, including that of the Chair. The new Acting Chair has had limited time to implement the significant changes required to bring about improvement. Governors are constrained from taking long-term decisions about the future leadership of the school by the imminent conversion to academy status. Parents have been fully consulted and informed about the school's proposal to become an academy.

External support

The school has received significant levels of support from the local authority and through the executive headteacher, particularly around action planning, achievement data analysis and monitoring of teaching. The impact of this has not been effective in developing the capacity of senior leaders, who are still heavily reliant on the external support they receive.

The partnership established with a local successful school has led to improvements in the leadership of and provision for special educational needs. Work with a local school has also contributed external moderation to confirm the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.