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6 March 2015

Mrs Sheila Todd  
Executive Headteacher  
Drapers Mills Primary Academy  
St Peter's Footpath  
Margate, CT9 2SP

Dear Mrs Todd

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Drapers Mills Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Jason Hughes, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 March 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2014. 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 proprietor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Simon Hughes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve significantly the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - making sure that activities are sufficiently challenging and interesting for pupils of all abilities
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve and the minimum rate at which their learning should proceed
  - ensuring that teachers use information about what pupils already know to set work at the right levels of difficulty for all pupils
  - ensuring that pupils are taught phonics more systematically
  - improving marking so that teachers' comments consistently make it clear to pupils how they should improve their work.
  
- Rapidly accelerate pupils' progress in all subjects, but especially in writing, by:
  - ensuring that they organise, develop and communicate their ideas by writing at length in a range of subjects
  - ensuring that pupils who find reading difficult have frequent opportunities to practise with suitable books
  - closing gaps for pupils supported through the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs with other pupils in the school
  - ensuring that the most-able pupils achieve higher levels of attainment.
  
- Increase the impact of leaders on raising standards by:
  - ensuring that all teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning more quickly and plan to address them more effectively
  - ensuring checks on pupils' attainment and progress are accurate, especially in those areas where pupils underperform most significantly
  - improving the quality of improvement plans so that indicators of success are more precise and those responsible for implementing actions can be held more effectively to account
  - ensuring that subject leaders are held to account more effectively for bringing about improvements in their areas of responsibility.
  
- Strengthen the impact of governance by:
  - holding senior leaders to account more effectively for progress towards the targets detailed in the school improvement plan
  - ensuring that senior leaders develop more effective strategies for engaging with parents and carers, and raising their confidence in the work of the academy.

An external review of governance, including the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, a group of teachers, groups of pupils and parents. The lead inspector also met the proprietor and the deputy chief executive officer of The Kennal Academies Trust (TKAT) and conducted a telephone interview with the chair of the interim executive board (IEB).

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, 23 members of staff have left the academy. Five new teachers have joined the academy, three of them in February 2015. Also, in February 2015, the academy appointed a new member of staff to work with families in the community and another to reduce the number of children who are excluded.

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

Achievement at the academy is improving. This is because the academy is using information about what pupils already know, understand and can do more effectively. Leaders have checked the standards of pupils' work with other schools locally and in the region. Leaders have also asked teachers to test pupils more regularly so that they can track each pupil's progress more closely. The results of these tests are analysed carefully and show that, over time, pupils are getting closer to the levels expected for their age. Standards in writing in Year 6, for example, have improved the most and are much higher than previously. Across the academy, standards in reading and mathematics have also improved, and in the early years, over two thirds of the children are on track to complete the Early Years Foundation Stage having reached a good level of development. Improvements to the way in which phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are taught have also resulted in much better progress. Over half of the pupils in Year 1 are on track to meet the age-expected standard for six-year-olds in phonics. There is still a long way to go.

Better achievement in lessons and over time are causing these improving results. Leaders at all levels have changed the way teaching is organised so that it is more effective and quickens pupils' learning. Most importantly, the plans teachers make for lessons are based more closely on the gaps pupils have in their knowledge and skills. Lessons in music and art, for example, are planned so that pupils can continue to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills. During the inspection, pupils in Year 5 were working with two external motivation coaches who were helping them to improve their self-belief and attitudes to learning. In Year 6, pupils were undertaking a writing workshop on fairy tales with an external provider. This was helping pupils to enjoy planning and preparing to write better, for longer and more creatively.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching at the academy is improving. There have been major improvements to the quality of the learning environments. The vast majority of classrooms are now bright, colourful and engaging spaces for the pupils. The redecoration of the Key Stage 1 area has added to this. Pupils' work is displayed well and there are good-quality displays which help pupils learn, for example, how to use punctuation properly, key spellings and important facts. One of the Year 5 classrooms has been converted skilfully to resemble a home from the 1940s so that pupils can learn what it was like to be a child at that time. The outside learning space for the early years classes is unrecognisable from the last visit. Good-quality play and learning equipment has been installed and the children make extremely good use of it. The pond area has been improved recently so that it is also an attractive space for pupils to learn. The school's resident artist is improving this space all the time.

Teaching in the early years and in Key Stage 1 has improved markedly. In every lesson, pupils were observed making good progress in their learning. The teaching of phonics has improved so that the standards of reading and writing are improving steadily. Pupils were observed sounding out words when reading simple texts. A greater supply of texts is available to support those struggling to learn to read. Teachers and teaching assistants generally work closely and well with groups of pupils, asking them questions, showing them how to do things and praising even the smallest achievements so that pupils' confidence is growing. In a Year 3 class, one of the teaching assistants was actively working with a group of pupils to write a story following a helpful pattern set by the teacher.

Teaching has also been improved in Key Stage 2 with extra teachers and teaching assistants added to Years 5 and 6. The pupils have been arranged into smaller groups so that they can benefit from more frequent individual work with adults. Pupils clearly like to have direct teaching from their class teacher. The checks that teachers make on pupils' learning have improved quickly too. TKAT's central Thanet team have worked closely with teachers to ensure that the quality of marking and feedback to pupils have improved. All teachers are following the clear and thoughtful practice set out in the academy's marking policy. This work is ensuring that pupils take greater care with their work, setting it out neatly. All pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government), are practising their handwriting carefully so that it is much clearer what they are trying to write. The most-able pupils, especially in mathematics, are still not receiving work that is hard enough for them. Teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are still not high enough.

Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are supported well, for the most part, in their learning. The teaching assistants have been reorganised so that their work is more sharply focused on individual children's needs. Leaders,

including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), have ensured that teaching assistants have had better training for their work. Some of this training relates to the specific difficulties of a few children. As a result, these pupils' progress is beginning to speed up and gaps between these pupils and their peers are beginning to close.

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

The behaviour of pupils in and around the academy is improving. Virtually no low-level disruption was seen by the inspectors. When teaching was weaker, a few pupils drifted off-task or became distracted. This happened rarely and only in upper Key Stage 2. The standard of academy uniform has improved dramatically. Pupils wear it with pride. Leaders and the proprietor have provided appropriate support to families in order to make this change. It has had an immediate impact on the academy's culture and ethos.

Similar work has been done to improve attendance which is now broadly in line with figures nationally. Leaders have also acted decisively to reduce the number of pupils excluded from the academy, the numbers of days lost to exclusion and the numbers of pupils excluded more than once. This work is having a positive effect on pupils as well as the community. The appointment of family liaison officers has contributed well to these improvements.

Teachers are also working with pupils to improve their attitudes to learning. This is beginning to be a successful strategy. As a result, pupils concentrate for longer and give up less easily when work gets harder. Teachers support this by more consistently using carefully thought out routines for managing behaviour. Pupils now properly observe rules about lining up, taking turns, and putting their hands up when they want to ask a question.

Inspectors examined the academy's logs of incidents relating to homophobia and racist behaviour, and found that there were a few occasions when pupils had used derogatory language about each other and members of staff. Inspectors found this at odds with the academy's statements about the way all members of the community should respect each other.

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

Many aspects of the leadership and management of the academy have improved quickly since the last visit. The governance of the academy is stronger because the IEB has recruited additional governors to support its work. This continues the work begun at the time of the last monitoring visit, instead of the formal review of governance required at the full inspection in June 2014. TKAT's senior leaders regularly visit the academy and hold its senior leaders robustly to account. Underperformance is tackled quickly. TKAT's central human resources team (HR)

provided invaluable support to the academy's senior leaders as it undertook the major restructuring in the autumn term. TKAT has set the academy ambitious performance targets for the coming year.

Senior leaders capture all their work in a much improved action plan which now helps them judge how quickly necessary improvements are occurring. This was not in place fully at the first monitoring visit. The plan is helpful in tracking overall improvements in pupils' learning. Leaders have become more secure recently in their judgements of pupils' achievement and, consequently, are better able to judge the overall effectiveness of the academy. Leaders are not always as accurate in their assessment of the effectiveness of teachers. Leaders have recently appointed staff to important roles just so that vacancies are filled.

One of the heads of school is beginning to take over more responsibility. He is coached, mentored and trained by the executive headteacher and, as a result, are improving quickly several aspects of their work. This head of school is becoming skilled at organising and arranging pupil performance data. All leaders are getting better at holding teachers to account for the performance of their pupils. Leaders have also become increasingly successful at developing meaningful relationships with parents. Leaders have recently appointed family liaison officers who carry out this work effectively.

The phase leaders are also growing in strength and confidence so that they are role models for their teams but are also better able to hold team members to account for performance. Pupils' progress meetings have become an important tool for leaders and teachers to keep their focus on how well each pupil is doing. Two of the phase leaders also have responsibility for the key subjects, English and mathematics. The mathematics leader is rightly making important changes to the way in which the subject is taught. He is providing good-quality training to all teachers to help them make the change as smoothly as possible.

Over time, the curriculum has improved to allow pupils to have a richer experience in school such as the creative writing workshop based on fairy tales. The academy's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good and is based on a strong commitment to equal opportunities.

The work that the academy does to keep pupils safe meets statutory requirements. However, the checks that it makes on any incidents that occur are not thorough enough. Leaders have not acted quickly and decisively enough when potential issues of a safeguarding nature are brought to their attention. It is not acceptable for them to wait for advice from external sources if there is any risk to the safety of pupils. The academy's written policies and procedures are good enough but the way they are put into action is sometimes inadequate.

## **External support**

At the first monitoring inspection, the proprietor's statement of action was judged not to be fit for purpose. Appropriate action has been taken to improve it so that it now meets the required standard. Much greater emphasis has rightly been placed on monitoring closely how well the academy is doing. The statement has also been improved by the inclusion of milestones so that a timetable by when key improvements have been made is set out. The arrangements for how the academy communicates with parents any important improvements have also been set out in the revised document.

TKAT continues to provide robust challenge and support to the leaders in the academy. Fortnightly visits focus on improvements to teaching and ongoing improvements to achievement. TKAT is appropriately withdrawing support provided by the central TKAT team, as improvements to the quality of middle leadership become more evident. This is an indication that the academy is better able to function independently and not over-rely on external support. TKAT has provided highly visible support for the improvements to the learning environment and the academy's uniform.