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Miss Melanie Wight
Acting headteacher
Redby Academy
Fulwell Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR6 9QP

Dear Miss Wight

Special measures monitoring inspection of Redby Academy

Following my visit with Nicola Nelson-Taylor Additional Inspector to your academy on 10 and 11 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy 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 academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Sunderland.

Yours sincerely
Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

Urgently improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, so that it is at least good in all classes by:

- setting robust targets for teachers' performance that link directly to pupils' short- and long-term progress and achievement targets
- monitoring these targets regularly so that any underachievement is spotted quickly and pupils are supported to catch up
- identifying weaknesses in teaching through regular and rigorous monitoring, then providing sustained, appropriate, good quality training programmes for teachers and teaching assistants
- improving the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' learning and their needs, both in lessons and over time, so that senior leaders have an accurate picture of the academy's performance
- reducing the use of worksheets as the dominant way of recording pupils' learning and by developing pupils' recording skills
- improving pupils' attitudes to learning by involving them more in lessons

Urgently raise standards in mathematics by:

- providing sustained training to improve teachers' subject knowledge so they are able to assess pupils' learning accurately and pitch work at the correct level
- rigorously assessing pupils' underachievement and devising a robust plan to rectify the existing gaps in pupils' learning
- reducing the use of worksheets in mathematics lessons by teaching pupils how to record their work, so that they consolidate their understanding of new concepts and can revise methods by looking over their work.

Improve provision in the Nursery quickly so that children have more opportunity to learn through well-planned play by providing training and support for:

- the Early Years Foundation Stage leader and the teaching assistants, so that all Nursery staff develop a better understanding of how young children learn
- all Nursery staff so that they are able to assess children's emerging learning needs accurately and plan provision which accelerates their learning.

Urgently improve leadership and management, including governance, by:

- ensuring that the headteacher gains a better knowledge of the academy's performance through direct, first-hand monitoring of its work
- ensuring that the headteacher devises a coherent management structure which ensures clear lines of accountability and responsibility for the work of senior and middle leaders, and which covers all aspects of the academy's work

- providing a calendar of monitoring activities for the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher which focus on the academy's most significant weaknesses and by allocating designated time to carry out these duties
- providing training for middle leaders and allocating time for them to carry out their responsibilities
- providing training for the Early Years Foundation Stage leader to raise her expectations of what children can achieve and develop her leadership skills to drive improvements to teaching and learning
- improving the effectiveness of governors so that they know how to hold the academy to account more robustly
- undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 10 – 11 March 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, spoke with pupils and scrutinised their workbooks and folders. Inspectors also scrutinised a range of the academy's documents. They also met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, including the executive headteacher, and with middle leaders, groups of pupils and parents and a representative of Durham's Education Development Services. The lead inspector spoke with the Chair of the Governing body on the telephone and met with the vice-chair and with a group of governors. Recent governing body minutes were scrutinised along with the academy's records of attendance, exclusions and other records relating to the behaviour of pupils.

Context

Since the previous inspection a new Chair of the Advisory Board has been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

- There is an overall trend of improvement in each key stage but key challenges remain if all pupils are to make the progress they should.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has established more rigorous tracking of children's progress. This helps both staff and parents see how well children are doing. However, expectations of what children can and should achieve must be higher. Furthermore, not enough is being done to give children access to a wider range of activities so that they can extend their skills and enjoyment across all aspects of the early years curriculum.
- There are still differences of what is expected of pupils between parallel year group classes in Key Stage 1. Expectations of all pupils are not consistently high between classes and this is a limiting factor in the progress pupils are making.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 continues, although some weaker teaching persists in parts of the Key Stage. Results in summer 2014 showed a larger number of pupils attaining higher levels.
- Gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge and skills are slowing sustained progress in mathematics. Too often pupils are unclear how best to deploy their basic mathematical skills to address knotty mathematical problems.
- Pupils show an increasing enjoyment of reading in the academy. A recently introduced reading initiative has given both staff and pupils keener insights into how reading is improving and is adding to pupils' enjoyment.
- Pupils with special educational needs are making better progress because the support they receive is carefully focused on their needs. Parents of pupils with special needs report that they are very satisfied with the help, challenge and care that their children receive from staff at the academy.

- Disadvantaged pupils continue to make better progress than their peers because the academy is focusing more carefully on their needs. The academy is working with increasing effectiveness to close the 'gap' between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers.

The quality of teaching

- Although there have been some improvements since the previous inspection, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are still not always high enough. The quality of teaching in the academy continues to be too variable.
- Pupils have more opportunities to write at length and develop stamina as writers. However, pupils are not being given enough chances to reflect on and explore their skills as writers. More needs to be done to enable pupils across the academy to write in a range of genres for a range of audiences.
- The recently introduced academy-wide approach to marking and feedback is increasingly helping pupils know what they need to do to improve. However, there is still some way to go before the approach is fully embedded so that the impact on pupils' learning can be assessed.
- A whole-academy approach to spelling has recently been introduced. This involves a shared approach to the correcting of spelling by staff and then a routine for pupils to follow to help them learn from their errors. In the work books seen by inspectors this whole-academy approach was generally being followed, but closer monitoring is needed to ensure that this approach is having a sustained effect.
- Generally presentation is improving in the work books and folders seen. However, although literacy and mathematics books were generally well presented, the work in pupils' topic books was not always of a similar standard.
- The work of teaching assistants is improving. Leaders have worked carefully, to check on teaching assistants' performance to ensure that they have much greater involvement in the planning and assessing of pupils' work. Teachers are more aware of their responsibilities for the effective deployment of this valuable group of staff. More needs to be done to focus their work even further and develop their expertise, particularly in supporting pupils' literacy development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

- Pupils continue to display consideration and care as they move around the academy. They are generally polite and respectful of staff and of each other.
- In class pupils generally respond quickly to staff requests, enjoy working together and are eager to learn. However, inspectors did observe some examples of low-level disruption, especially in Key Stage One classes when pupils became disinterested in the challenge presented in the tasks they were given.
- Pupils continue to feel safe at the academy. They also know how to keep themselves safe on-line. They report that they have regular assemblies and other opportunities to make sure that they are constantly aware of the potential dangers when using the Internet.

- Attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils, continues to improve and is now above national averages.
- The vast majority of parents spoken with expressed high levels of satisfaction with the academy and its communication with parents. The headteacher's presence and accessibility in the playground at the start and end of the day were particularly welcomed.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

- Leaders are now addressing the academy's weaknesses more promptly and are taking effective action, especially in addressing weaknesses in teaching. Although there is still work to be done, the roles and tasks of senior leaders are now set out more clearly. As a result they are now more able to focus on the specific actions required to ensure that the quality of teaching improves.
- The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to have a positive impact. The work is now more purposeful and expectations of children's capabilities are rising. However, more needs to be done by leaders to ensure that all staff have the highest expectations of the progress that children can make during their time in early years.
- Governors' knowledge and understanding of the academy's work and its weaknesses continue to improve. This is because, increasingly, they are gaining insights into the academy's work from a wider range of sources. For example, pairs of governors are now linked to leaders of literacy and numeracy. This means that governors now gain detailed information about the needs of the academy at first hand and are better able to make informed decisions about the actions leaders need to take to ensure that the academy improves.
- Meetings to discuss pupils' progress are now established and more regular and involve a review of the progress being made by all pupils. Although it is still early days, these discussions are already having a positive impact on the provision because teachers have a much better understanding of the progress being made by pupils in each class. Significantly, this work is underpinned by middle leaders being increasingly involved and taking responsibility in checking on the work of their teams.
- A positive outcome of the pupil progress meetings has been the identification by leaders of innovative ways to support individuals and groups of pupils. This has resulted in the very recent setting up of 'booster' classes. Pupils, and their parents, are invited to attend these before and after academy sessions. This work is, however, recent and Her Majesty's Inspector will consider its effectiveness at the next visit.
- Leaders are now collecting and analysing data about pupils' progress and attainment more often but staffing changes are affecting the reliability of what is collected. Leaders must ensure that this evidence is triangulated with other sources of information to check on its accuracy.
- The roles of middle leaders are developing effectively and they have more time to undertake their roles. However, more still needs to be done to develop their skills.

For example, their role in scrutinising pupils' workbooks and folders needs to be more focused on the progress being made by pupils so that middle leaders are able to give more detailed feedback to their teams on how they can improve.

External support

The academy continues to receive effective and significant support from the Wearmouth Learning Trust. The Trust offers support in assuring the quality of the work of the academy. It also provides support services such as advice about staffing and personnel matters. The academy is also supported by Sunderland local authority. The authority helps assure the accuracy of test and assessment information in Early Years Foundation Stage and at the end of Key Stages. The academy also enjoys effective support from Durham's Education Development Service in support for writing and for middle leaders.