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23 March 2015

Julie Green
Executive Headteacher
Horninglow Primary School
Horninglow Road North
Burton-on-Trent
DE13 0SW

Dear Mrs Green

Special measures monitoring inspection of Horninglow Primary School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Needham, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19–20 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 September 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement 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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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 Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector

- Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- For the Secretary of State
- Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that, in all classes, pupils are offered the right level of challenge and support by making sure that:
 - teachers plan more work specifically for the most-able pupils to extend their learning
 - teachers check more often that pupils are sustaining their learning throughout lessons, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - teaching in the Reception class is consistently good
 - teachers and support staff have more opportunities to see and share best practice.
- Improve pupils' attainment in reading and writing and sustain the rise in achievement in mathematics by giving pupils:
 - more opportunities to write at length across a broad range of subjects, and enough time for them to edit and improve their writing
 - more varied and interesting books to read, making sure that teachers and support staff check more frequently that pupils are improving their reading skills
 - opportunities to develop and improve their problem-solving skills in all mathematics lessons
 - more opportunities to explain their calculation methods when solving mathematical problems in all classes.
- Make sure that leaders, managers and the governing body have a greater impact on improving teaching to raise achievement in all year groups by:
 - securing strong leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage Foundation Stage to develop more good and outstanding teaching across the key stage
 - making sure teachers and leaders assess and check pupils' progress and performance more often so that all pupils achieve as well as they should
 - setting clear targets and measures of success in the school's development and action plans
 - monitoring the quality of teaching more accurately and thoroughly to provide teachers and support staff with the right pointers and guidance to improve their teaching
 - improving the quality and effectiveness of supervision at break times to ensure that all Key Stage 2 pupils behave well and safely.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. An external review

of the school'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 19–20 March 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and five governors, including the new Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors visited lessons and looked at the work in pupils' books. They met with the teachers responsible for English, the early years and special educational needs. Inspectors also considered written records of the checks made by leaders on the quality of teaching and information about the progress made by pupils.

Context

The school is part of the Burton Co-Operative Learning Trust. Since my previous visit the headteacher has resigned, along with the leader responsible for the early years. An executive headteacher has been appointed and took up post on 28 February 2015. A deputy headteacher has been seconded to the school for one day each week. Nursery, Reception and Year 6 classes are being taught by temporary teachers. A new governing body was formed in early February in response to the review of governance requested at the school's previous inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment across the school remains low, particularly in the early years and Years 1, 4 and 6. School information shows that progress is slow in all key stages, with the proportions of pupils making expected progress significantly below those found in other schools nationally.

Small steps of recovery are evident, particularly in reading, because leaders have:

- purchased new reading books that are in line with pupils' reading ability and skills in phonic (the sounds that letters make)
- begun to make sure that pupils read to an adult in school more often
- started to check that pupils read at home
- insisted that phonics is taught regularly
- tested pupils' reading ages compared to their actual ages.

These measures are beginning to have an impact on pupils' ability to read. However, a considerable proportion of pupils are still reading at a level below their actual age. Leaders know from their checking of reading across the school that this relates directly to how frequently pupils read to adults, both at home and at school, and how well phonics is taught. Not all teachers see the importance of these new measures, particularly in the early years and some areas of lower Key Stage 2. This reluctance to follow school policy is limiting pupils' progress in acquiring this vital skill.

Leaders' insistence on teaching basic punctuation, grammar and spelling systematically is beginning to improve pupils' technical skills, albeit from low starting points. Leaders have sensibly focused on improving pupils' ability to master story-writing rather than jumping too soon to other types of writing, so that pupils can begin to build on the small steps of success in this particular area of writing. Leaders understand that further work and support for teachers are needed so that they can make sure that pupils fully understand the language and structures associated with the various forms of narrative writing.

Teachers' lack of understanding of how to deepen pupils' understanding, fluency and reasoning in mathematics is slowing pupils' progress. The problems presented to pupils, particularly the most able, do not help to develop their ability to think deeply. Too often pupils are given pages of similar calculations to complete, and where problems are presented, these invariably involve only one step and are often easier than the earlier work. Leaders have introduced a new policy for teaching mathematics, and they have begun to test pupils' mathematical skills and compare them to those expected for their actual age to help improve teachers' knowledge of how and what to teach.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is still not good enough to eradicate the widespread underachievement across the school. Most teachers are willing to learn and to improve their practice. There are early signs of teachers checking that pupils are sustaining their learning throughout lessons.

The teaching of reading is becoming more systematic and frequent. Pupils enjoy the new daily reading lessons, reading incentives to see who can read the most books and the new initiative of reading with Darcy 'the school reading dog'. Pupils are encouraged to curl up next to Darcy and read. Darcy shows her appreciation of being read to by giving a big yawn, a sigh or sometimes a lick. Reading corners are becoming more inviting and leaders are currently developing new areas and a central school library to further encourage pupils to read.

While these strategies are promoting a growing love of reading, teachers must ensure that they check pupils' skills are improving. It is also essential that when teaching the reading skills of skimming and scanning texts, teachers themselves fully understand what each skill is – as they often confuse the two. Similarly, when teaching poetry, teachers need to be fully conversant with the imagery and symbolism in the poem so that they can help pupils have a better understanding of why a poet chooses the language they do. In two poetry lessons observed, teachers did not have a deep enough understanding of the poem and were therefore unable to help pupils answer the question set: why did the poet choose the language used?

Some teachers are still unclear about how to make sure learning is appropriate for all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs. For example, some teachers still expect the least able pupils to do much less than other pupils. Where teaching is improving, teachers are beginning to understand that is the way in which a question is asked or set out that provides more challenge, rather than simply using bigger numbers or asking pupils to do more of the same.

Poor quality support and conflicting advice commissioned by the local authority have impeded improvements in the teaching of reading in early years. This has resulted in confusion at best and teachers refusing to follow agreed school policy at worst. This is unacceptable.

The quality of presentation in pupils' books is variable. Teachers do not insist that pupils use neat, fluent cursive handwriting. In fact their own handwriting is often untidy with poor letter formation and this does not provide an appropriate model or encourage pupils to approach their work with care and attention.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons is generally improving, particularly when work set is interesting. However, there are times when pupils become bored because work is not set at the right level of difficulty for them or because teachers do not explain what they have to do carefully enough. Pupils say that behaviour in lessons has improved but a few pupils who do misbehave stop others from learning.

Playtime has improved. However, some boisterous play still often results in minor incidents. Playground supervision has been increased but not all staff are as vigilant as they should be.

Attendance is broadly average. Appropriate procedures are used to encourage regular attendance.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The pace of change since late February has been rapid. The most notable improvements are:

- better safeguarding and health and safety procedures
- precise and timely plans for improvement
- better governance arrangements
- specific and timely support provided for staff where teaching is ineffective
- teachers being held firmly responsible for the attainment and progress of pupils in their class
- insistence that school policies are followed.

Clarity of thought and firm action by the executive headteacher are beginning to improve the quality of pupils' education. A no-nonsense approach, including the introduction of rigorous systems and policies, is bringing much needed stability and order to the school. Safeguarding procedures have been reviewed with improved arrangements for protecting any pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Recent action taken to comply with legal requirements such as correct signage and carrying out risk assessments on play equipment means that the early years classrooms now meet the standards required. Leaders make sure that all visitors are now challenged when they enter the building and are told of all relevant policies and what to do in the event of concerns. Leaders are aware that some areas of safeguarding still need further refinement owing to poor and inaccurate advice from support commissioned by the local authority, which has slowed progress.

Frequent and accurate checking on the work of teachers is beginning to improve teaching, particularly in reading and writing. Teachers have all been set performance targets related to improving pupils' attainment and progress. They are given training to improve their skills but not all teachers are making best use of the support given. It is here where pupils' learning is showing least improvement. Better assessment systems are helping most teachers to more accurately record pupils' attainment and progress. However, these systems are too new to see any discernible impact.

Leadership of the early years remains weak. There have been improvements to the outdoor area and some other aspects of the building. However, assessment practices are insecure so it is difficult to demonstrate that children are making progress. Children's 'learning journeys' show that their work does not match recorded judgements. Staff expectations of what children can and should be able to do are too low.

Governance, with the support of the trust, is much improved. New appointments have led to governors having a better understanding of the strengths and endemic weaknesses in the school. They are well aware that much work is needed to improve teaching. Poor financial planning and poor recruitment practices have led to the school's current position, where it has underspent its budget by 30%. Governors are taking steps to ensure that financial management is put on a secure footing and resources used more effectively to support pupils' learning. A recent audit shows that expenditure earmarked for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding has not been spent wisely. Governors and the executive headteacher are responding appropriately to the audit.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. The commissioning manager for the school has a good understanding of the school's position and has taken appropriate steps to support it. However, some of the

commissioned support has been of poor quality, as has the information given on safeguarding. Some of the advice given has caused conflict and confusion, particularly in relation to the teaching of reading in the early years. This has restricted leaders' ability to improve the school.