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30 April 2015

Ms Lynne Law  
Executive Headteacher  
Grove Primary School  
Caledonia Road  
Wolverhampton  
WV2 1HZ

Dear Ms Law

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Grove Primary School**

Following my visit with Jeannette Mackinney, Additional Inspector, to your school on 28–29 April 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 fifth 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
- Contractor providing support services on behalf of the local authority - where appropriate
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead and team inspectors.

## **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 fifth monitoring inspection on 28–29 April 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and checked arrangements for safeguarding pupils. They met with the newly appointed executive headteacher, two headteachers, senior and middle leaders, the business manager, the attendance officer, representatives from the local authority, parents and groups of pupils. An inspector spoke by telephone to the director of education of an academy chain. The Chair of the Governing Body was unavailable to meet or to speak to by telephone during both days of the inspection. Inspectors conducted joint lesson observations with the executive headteacher and two headteachers. A book scrutiny was carried out of Year 1 and 3 work in literacy, numeracy and science.

### **Context**

One week before this monitoring inspection, an executive headteacher and two headteachers from a local multi-academy trust were appointed to lead the school until it becomes an academy. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have reverted to their substantive roles as deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher respectively. The involvement of a previous executive headteacher has now finished. The early years coordinator is on a phased return from sickness. Four teaching positions are being covered by supply teachers. The date for the school converting to be an academy has been postponed for a third time and is now scheduled for 1 June 2015. Following the very recent change of leadership, eight temporary teaching supply posts and seven temporary teaching assistant supply posts have been terminated.

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

The most recent achievement data compiled by the new leadership team indicates that overall progress of pupils from September 2014 to Easter 2015 is inadequate. Forecasts for this year's Key Stage 2 tests indicate that the proportion of pupils likely to achieve at least the expected Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics will be well below last year's national average. Predictions for assessments in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 and phonics at the end of the Year 1 also indicate pupils are working well below the expected standards for their age.

The school's most recent data indicates that the proportion of pupils currently in Year 6 making expected progress in reading from the start of Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with the previous year's national figures, although the proportion making more than expected progress is below last year's national percentage. The

proportion of pupils making expected and more than expected progress in writing and mathematics is much lower than reading, however, and well below previous national levels.

In some year groups – Years 1, 2, 4 and 5 – the school's data indicates pupils are making outstanding progress. However, new leaders have rightly questioned the accuracy of teachers' assessments and previous baseline information. Evidence from observation of lessons, work in pupils' books and teaching over time indicate pupils in these year groups, as well as most other year groups, are not making enough progress. Only in Year 6 is there clear evidence of pupils making more rapid progress since September 2014.

Observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books indicate that standards are low in year groups across the school. Pupils were not making enough progress in the large majority of 13 lessons seen during this visit, especially where work set was too easy or too hard. Consequently, all groups, including pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and the most-able pupils, were also making limited progress as their specific learning needs were not sufficiently targeted.

In the small proportion of lessons seen where pupils were making good progress, work set was pitched at the right level for all groups of pupils. It was challenging and engaged pupils' enthusiasm. For example, in Year 6, pupils were set practice questions in mathematics linked to what they needed to achieve to reach the next step in their learning.

In the Nursery, effective questioning by adults promoted rapid learning. This enabled children to extend their understanding and vocabulary range. Children were encouraged to sound out their letters correctly in reading and all spoken to were able to count to ten.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching and learning over time is inadequate. The high turnover of staff, especially supply and cover staff, has been a contributory factor in many classes. However, even where staffing has remained constant, there has been little sign of improvement and in some cases deterioration. Too many of the senior and middle leadership team who teach classes have been unable to lead by example in ensuring pupils make good progress in their lessons.

Work set and planned for too often does not take account of what is the right level for individuals or groups of learners based on their previous learning or starting points. This leads to a mismatch between the level the pupil is working at and the demand of the task. Some pupils find the work too easy. They finish tasks very quickly and can get bored if there is no extension work. Meanwhile, others are asked

to complete complex tasks, such as writing sentences using a wide range of tenses, when they are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Evidence from pupils' books indicates that there are inaccuracies in teachers' assessments, which means that pupils are set unrealistic targets.

Questioning is still too often pitched at the whole class. Teachers and other adults too often allow volunteers with their hands up to answer. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to ask questions of teachers or each other. Pupils are occasionally asked to discuss ideas with a partner, but this is underdeveloped. At its best, questioning is directed at different levels of difficulty for identified pupils to respond to. In one Year 6 mathematics lesson, a small group of quiet girls were not volunteering answers so the teacher targeted them by name and challenged them to give reasons for their answers.

There are gaps in teachers' subject and grammar knowledge. Too many older pupils do not have the phonic skills to decode unfamiliar words in their reading. This impedes their learning in other subjects where they are required to read and research for information. Other pupils, especially those of the pupils learning English as an additional who are already familiar with the Roman alphabet from their first language, are able to read with fluency and accuracy but do not understand enough of what they have read to apply to their learning of other subjects.

Too few teachers are complying with the school's marking policy of using green and pink highlighter pens. This leads to inconsistencies in approaches. Marking has little impact on developing pupils' learning. Expectations are too low where teachers overly praise pupils and do not pick up misconceptions or errors. Pupils' letter formation and presentation of work is often poor, with much left unfinished and unchallenged by teachers. Where extension tasks are set, pupils either do not respond or, if they do, this is not consistently checked by the teacher. Some extension tasks are of a very low level or are closed questions that require a one-word answer. Pupils' books looked at in Years 1 and 3 indicate a lack of continuity in teaching from the high turnover of supply teachers marking their work

Additional adults are not always used effectively enough. Occasionally, the teacher deploys them well and they contribute to assessment by making notes on what individuals have achieved or are still finding difficult. However, in too many cases, there is no focus identified for their work. At times, additional adults give answers to pupils rather than encouraging them through questioning and prompts to find the correct answer for themselves.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are happy to come to school. Most enjoy school because they are compliant and happy to do whatever teachers ask of them, even if tasks are low level and undemanding or too difficult. They are content to be directed by adults in their

learning. The large majority of pupils behave well in lessons, even where the pace of learning dips. A few children become bored and switch off, which leads to some incidents of low-level disruption. Where the same pupils were observed in different lessons, inspectors saw a marked contrast in their attitude to learning depending on the challenge and level of engagement in the activity.

Where inspectors saw incidents of low-level disruption, these were usually linked to the quality of the learning in the lesson. Where these incidents occurred, they did not impede other pupils from getting on with their work. Pupils spoken to said behaviour is generally good, apart from name-calling from some older boys in Key Stage 2. They said that, sometimes, this name-calling is linked to pupils' differences.

Pupils get on well with each other, and when work is set at the appropriate level of challenge they are able to work on their own or in a group to support each other. In the most effective lessons, pupils know what strategies they should follow if they get stuck, other than simply asking an adult. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. New leaders stated that there have been very few reported behaviour incidents since they started.

Arrangements to keep pupils safe are secure, and the school meets its statutory safeguarding responsibilities. Parents and pupils reported there were isolated incidents of bullying and that most, but not all, were followed up and dealt with well. Pupils knew who to go to if they worried about anything.

The attendance rate has declined since the start of September 2014 and is currently below the national average. Despite the targeting of attendance of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, attendance for this group has continued to fall in each half term in Years 1 and 5. A number of strategies have been employed or planned for, including sanctions and rewards for parents, but these have not led to any measurable progress. Arrangements for an identified member of the senior leadership team to provide strategic leadership on attendance, as previously recommended, have not been acted upon.

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

In just one week, the new interim leadership team has begun to get to grips with the many challenges facing the school. It has carried out a full audit identifying the issues that need to be addressed but it is far too early to see the impact of the changes leaders are introducing. Several staff spoken to welcomed the changes but reported that they had come 'too late for the pupils'.

New leaders have identified key weaknesses in leadership and management in the school and the lack of any measurable progress in addressing previously identified weaknesses. The new leadership arrangements, however, are temporary and there

is insufficient capacity within the current leadership team to carry through the improvements required.

Timetables have been reorganised to ensure that existing senior and middle leaders spend more time teaching so that they improve the quality of their own teaching. This has led to a reduction in the numbers of supply and cover teachers and teaching assistants needed, and new leaders have taken rapid action to address this.

A detailed analysis has been produced of current achievement data, although new leaders recognise that it is based on teachers' previously unreliable assessment information. New leaders have a very accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning in the school. In all joint observations carried out with inspectors, they identified clearly the strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement. Previous monitoring of teaching by leaders has not led to any improvements in the overall quality of teaching and learning.

The new leadership team are hampered by the short-term nature of their role and impending academy conversion from making the long-term decisions required to move the school forward. The headteacher vacancy remains unadvertised and there are currently at least five teacher vacancies to be filled by September 2015.

The governing body has not met recently as it had anticipated the school converting to an academy, initially by 1 March and then by 1 April 2015. It has not met to ratify the new leadership arrangements. It was not possible to speak to any governors on this visit to check how they are holding the school to account for its declining performance and to check if they know whether leaders meet all their safeguarding requirements. There is a parent forum but there are no parent governors.

The continued delay and postponement of the academy conversion has resulted in the proposed academy sponsor not recruiting or appointing a headteacher until funding arrangements for the academy have been resolved.

Most parents spoken to were generally content with the school, often because their children told them they were happy. Many spoken to did not have a clear view of what was happening in the school. Although the school had sent letters home about the recent leadership changes, some parents had not seen the letter and others had been unable to read it because they did not speak or read English fluently. None spoken to said they accessed information from the school's website. There were no entries on Parent View at the time of the inspection visit.

## **External support**

The local authority has been carrying out a dual role since the resignation of the governing body in taking the leadership of governance and carrying out its local



authority role to support and challenge the school through regular reviews. Previous recommendations have not been acted upon by leaders.

The impending academy conversion has led to the local authority not making any long-term decisions, such as setting up an interim executive board or recruiting a new headteacher. Further uncertainty and delays in the timescale have exacerbated the situation. However, the local authority has taken very recent and decisive action to replace the current leadership with an interim executive headteacher and two headteachers from a local multi-academy trust.

The arrangement with the previous executive headteacher did not lead to any significant improvements as the measures and procedures introduced were not followed up by leaders in the school.

The continued delays and postponements to academy conversion have meant that neither the governing body, local authority nor proposed academy sponsor have made the long-term decisions required to arrest the continued decline in the school.

### **Priority for further improvement**

- The governing body, local authority and proposed academy sponsor must meet together as a matter of urgency to resolve the future direction and leadership of the school and make immediate decisions with precise deadlines concerning its status as an academy.