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Mr Martin McCusker
Headteacher
Temple Mill Primary School
Cliffe Road
Rochester
ME2 3NL

Dear Mr McCusker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Temple Mill Primary School

Following my visit with Clive Close Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 29 and 30 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 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 Medway.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching so that all groups of pupils achieve well by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that pupils are set work that is hard enough, particularly the most able
 - ensuring pupils are not set work that they have already completed successfully
 - making sure tasks capture pupils' interest so that they settle to work quickly and concentrate fully on their learning
 - ensuring pupils understand what they have done well in their work and how to improve further, both when referring to specific pieces of work, and in the longer term
 - creating stronger links across subjects to deepen pupils' understanding and give them opportunities to practise key skills such as writing and mathematics.
- Strengthen leadership at all levels so leaders are able to improve outcomes for pupils rapidly by:
 - ensuring all teachers have good subject knowledge in all areas
 - providing clear guidance to teachers as to expectations in handwriting, spelling and volume of work
 - ensuring any pupils in danger of falling behind are helped to catch up, particularly those who do not reach the required standard in phonics in Key Stage 1
 - checking information on the academic performance of different groups carefully and using it to provide what they need to close gaps in their learning
 - strengthening safeguarding practices as a matter of urgency, particularly in the early years provision
 - developing a vibrant curriculum that offers greater opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

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 29 and 30 April 2015

Evidence

The inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class. Four visits to classrooms were carried out jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors met with the headteacher, the Reception teacher, the inclusion manager, the subject leader for mathematics, two groups of pupils, two governors, the site manager and a representative from the local authority. The inspectors spoke informally to parents at the school gate and took account of 49 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors also attended an assembly, looked at pupils' workbooks and heard pupils read. The inspectors considered the minutes of the interim executive board (IEB), information about pupils' progress, documentation relating to safeguarding, records relating to behaviour, bullying and attendance, and the school's records of checks made on the quality of teaching.

Context

A new substantive headteacher took up post in April 2015, following a period of interim leadership since November 2014. The deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher left the school at the end of March 2015. Temporary teachers are covering their Year 1 and Year 2 classes until the end of the summer term 2015. The Year 4 class teacher, who is also subject leader for English, has been on sick leave since January 2015 and is currently making a phased return to work. The Year 4 class has been taught by temporary staff during this teacher's absence. Governors continue to explore academy status.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain too low in most classes. Too many pupils are working below the level expected for their age. This is because information about what pupils can do is still not used routinely to identify pupils' needs and plan the right work to help pupils catch up.

In Year 6, standards in reading and mathematics have improved since 2014 and pupils are on track to attain levels in line with the national average. Standards in writing remain below national levels.

In Year 2, reading standards were in line with the national average in 2014 and this is still the case. Pupils are not on track to reach the level expected for their age in either mathematics or writing.

More able pupils in Year 6 achieve in line with, or better than, the national average in reading and mathematics. In Year 2, the more able pupils are in line with national

standards in reading, but below in mathematics. Writing standards are below national expectations for more able pupils in both Year 6 and Year 2.

There are still gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in all classes. In some classes these pupils make progress as good as or better than other pupils; however, they started further behind. They are generally not catching up fast enough in order to close the gaps with their classmates.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve remain too low in writing and mathematics. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and practise their skills. As a result, progress is slow. In mathematics, similar work is often repeated and pupils are not offered the next level of challenge to move learning on.

Across the school, pupils achieve better in reading than in writing and mathematics. Standards in phonics (letters and sounds) are improving. Pupils are keen to read and use their knowledge of phonics successfully to tackle unknown words.

Teaching in the Reception class has strengthened. Consequently, a higher proportion of children are on track to achieve a good level of development than the national average.

The quality of teaching

Visits to classes and work in pupils' books show that the quality of teaching varies across the school. Where teaching is stronger, pupils are set challenges which are tailored to their needs. For example, in a Year 6 reading lesson, each group was given questions targeted on specific areas they previously found difficult. The teacher ensured they had the right support to correct their errors and make good progress. This is not the routine in all classes. Too often all pupils are set the same task and the work for many is consequently too easy or too difficult. On these occasions learning does not move on as quickly as it should.

All teachers use the school's marking scheme consistently. Teachers' feedback indicates if pupils have done well and where they have made mistakes, but it rarely shows them precisely how and what to improve. There are few opportunities to check pupils' understanding or set further challenges. As a result the regular time allocated for pupils to improve their work is often wasted.

Where pupils are motivated by their work they settle quickly and concentrate well. This was the case in a Year 1 lesson where pupils were captivated by the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk* because they had just 'met' the characters (in the form of some well-executed role play by adults!). These pupils were keen to get their ideas down on paper. However, in lessons where learning is too easy or too hard some pupils still lose focus and start to misbehave. This poor behaviour holds learning back.

Work in topic books offers some limited opportunities for pupils to implement what they learn in writing and mathematics across other subjects. However, teachers' expectations are too low. There are many worksheets, which limit the amount of writing pupils produce. Pupils are not encouraged to think for themselves and the tasks set do not help them develop their skills effectively.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The majority of parents agree that their child is safe and happy in school. There is a higher level of supervision which ensures pupils across the school are well looked after at playtime.

Parents welcome changes to the start of the school day. These include additional staff supervision and closer control of vehicles as they drop pupils off. As a result, there is a calmer start and pupils are safer.

Pupils are now more able to explain what bullying is. Parents are equally divided in their views about how well bullying is tackled. However, pupils say that it is better now than it used to be. They confirm that bullying does sometimes occur, but also say that teachers deal with it effectively.

Leaders have rightly accessed expert support for individual pupils who present challenging behaviour. Specialist behaviour training has increased staff confidence. As a result, the number of exclusions has reduced considerably and pupils say behaviour has improved.

Further work has been done to improve safeguarding procedures and these now meet requirements. Governors sensibly completed the Medway safeguarding audit to check the school's processes are fully in place. They are systematically addressing areas identified for improvement, such as ensuring policies are kept up to date. The local authority's Head of Performance and Strategic Planning provided useful guidance relating to site security, to ensure the school's procedures are robust.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

During the period of interim leadership, progress was too slow. Staff absence and the changes in leadership slowed the rate of improvement. There was no cohesive action plan and, as a result, there was no strategic approach to drive school improvement.

The new headteacher is focused and determined in his push to make the necessary improvements so that the school no longer requires special measures. Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the governors and new headteacher have taken appropriate steps to ensure that the school's action plan is fit for

purpose. The new action plan is just being finalised. It focuses on the right areas, linked to the Ofsted inspection in October 2014. The headteacher recognises the need to make targets very specific so that teachers know exactly what they are aiming for, and to help leaders and governors check progress. The headteacher has rightly identified writing as an additional key area to improve across the school and will include this in the plan.

Key staff absence has stalled improvement in English, particularly in writing. The subject leader for mathematics supports teachers with planning the right work to help pupils reach the standards they should. Changes in teachers, coupled with the weak subject knowledge of some staff, mean this has had variable impact.

The inclusion manager collates information about the progress of vulnerable pupils, but does not use this strategically to inform next steps. For example, checks are not made to ensure the additional support for pupils who are falling behind is effective. As a result, school leaders are not well placed to plan improvements in the provision for different groups of pupils. It is good to see a nominated governor is working with the inclusion manager to address recommendations from the external review of the pupil premium (additional funding for disadvantaged pupils) which took place in February 2015. The headteacher and governors recognise this work needs to be included in the school's action plan to ensure its success.

Governors successfully appointed a new substantive headteacher, and the appointment of a new deputy headteacher is underway. This is strengthening the school's leadership. Each governor has sensibly been allocated a specific area of focus, such as health and safety or pupil premium. This ensures their good range of expertise is used more effectively. They provide more robust challenge to school leaders, for example asking for external checks to ensure the reliability of teachers' assessments. Governors have clarified leaders' roles and responsibilities and put in place useful new procedures, such as ways to track the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They are ensuring the right policies are in place to underpin their work. Governors are fully aware that all these systems need to be fully implemented to support more rapid improvement.

External support

The local authority offers helpful assistance. For example, an early years specialist strengthens teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a newly-allocated mentor for the headteacher in order to widen networks with other schools. The advisory headteacher from St Mary's Island CE School continues to provide invaluable support for a newly qualified teacher, and teachers from the Howard Academy visit regularly to help Year 6 pupils catch up in English and mathematics.