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Mrs Madeleine Bromley
Court Farm Primary School
Tedbury Crescent
Erdington
Birmingham
B23 5NS

Dear Mrs Bromley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Court Farm Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 May 2015 with Stuart Bellworthy HMI, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the phase leader for the early years and Key Stage 1, a representative of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the national leader of education (NLE) currently supporting the school. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. The headteacher's report and the record of the local authority's monitoring task force meeting were also considered.

Context

The Year 2 teacher and the assistant headteacher left the school in January. They have not been replaced. The leader for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs joined the school in January and was made a permanent member of staff at the beginning of May. The governors have recently reconstituted and will

determine their responsibilities and final structure at their first meeting in June. The school is at a very early stage of considering future academy status.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The NLE from the Learning Trust for Excellence took immediate action to support the school's current leaders, help raise expectations of teaching and provide all staff with relevant strategies to drive improvement. She quickly identified the most pertinent priorities and provided the necessary staff training to accelerate pupils' rates of progress. Following training events, teachers identify their own development needs, practise new skills and reflect on their effectiveness during reviews of their work. School leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and provide feedback for ongoing development. Teachers now know they are accountable for the rates of progress pupils achieve in their classes.

The headteacher understands the need for speedy improvement and has successfully drawn all staff together with a culture of 'no excuses'. Staff are determined to bring about the necessary improvements and remain positive about the journey ahead. The headteacher ensures that staff receive the necessary support but is determined to challenge weak teaching where it persists. The headteacher has identified strengths within the current staff and has delegated responsibilities where appropriate. These staff have risen to the challenge and are keen to develop their own skills further.

The significant and regular training provided by the NLE and the Trust has provided staff with straight forward strategies to help pupils take a greater ownership for their learning. As a consequence, pupils know that displays in the classroom now provide helpful support and hints to help them select what they need. There are informative reminders on their tables to help them punctuate their work accurately and useful prompts to help them write interesting, well-structured sentences. Teachers have accepted and implemented higher expectations for pupils' written work. In addition, teachers have introduced interesting events and stimulus to inspire pupils' writing. As a result, leaders report that pupils are more engaged in their learning and more equipped to make better progress.

The phase leader for the early years and Key Stage 1 evaluated how well reading was taught. She has introduced a greater focus on teaching the necessary skills for reading in lessons and planned additional sessions for pupils to read to an adult where needed. She has worked closely with a skilled teaching assistant from the Trust to introduce structured reading programmes and helped teachers plan for pupils' continued progression. The school's records demonstrate improvement within short periods of time.

The leader for special educational needs conducted checks on the support given to pupils and its effectiveness. She ensured that pupils requiring education and health care plans receive the help they need. In addition, she has ensured all teachers

understand their responsibilities in providing targeted support for pupils with learning difficulties. As a result, pupils are more included in day-to-day lessons while receiving the support they need when required.

Leaders were quick to acknowledge that where pupils' behaviour was disruptive in lessons, aspects of teaching were not strong enough. Training has focused well on improving the quality of teaching and providing pupils with accessible information to help them succeed. For example, pupils are beginning to understand that they are also responsible for their learning. They are frequently reminded of their responsibility through the 'four Rs'; resilience, readiness, resourcefulness and reflectiveness. Leaders report that pupils' behaviour has improved. Pupils have been trained as 'buddies' to help other pupils during break times and displays remind them about the different forms of bullying. Where incidents of bullying occur, the headteacher and deputy headteacher are quick to intervene, record what has been done and involve parents over a period of time until incidents are resolved.

Leaders have helped to strengthen teaching and learning. However, these initiatives have not been planned in sufficient detail to indicate what must be done over a period of time. The school improvement plan fails to demonstrate the fundamental responsibilities of individuals to drive improvements with sufficient urgency or clarity. Those responsible for leading change are not identified. The actions necessary to bring about improvements are insufficiently detailed and expected outcomes are unclear. Therefore, it is not possible to track the implementation of improvement or evaluate how well the school is doing against a bedrock of planned intention.

The local authority's statement of action includes all areas for improvement identified in the previous section 5 report. The school improvement adviser secured effective expertise from the NLE to support Court Farm. The local authority adopted the school's improvement plan as a means of identifying individual actions, timescales and resources. As reported above, the school's improvement plan is insufficiently detailed and, consequently, the local authority's action plan also lacks key information. The local authority has established a monitoring task force to monitor the implementation of improvements.

Governors have not yet had their first meeting as a reconstituted governing body. In preparation they have conducted an audit of available skills and appointments have been made according to the specific areas of expertise provided by applicants. They have identified more regular visits to the school with planned focus areas and they are keen to develop their own skills.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway

Her Majesty's Inspector