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Anita Cliff
Executive Headteacher
Hill Avenue Primary School
Hill Avenue
Lanesfield
Wolverhampton
WV4 6PY

Dear Mrs Cliff

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hill Avenue Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 May 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 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 February 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Documents, including the Manor Teaching School Alliance Support Plan and minutes of meetings of the governing body, were analysed. Pupils' books were looked at and short visits were made to classrooms and outdoor areas. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection in February, the headteacher has left and an executive headteacher now leads the school. A deputy headteacher began working at the school this term and a head of school will be in post before half term. The local authority is awaiting a decision about the establishment of an interim executive board and three new governors have been appointed. The school is receiving considerable support from the local authority and the Manor Teaching School

Alliance. This includes support from a National Leader of Education, a Local Leader of Education and four Specialist Leaders of Education.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Last term, school leaders made slow progress against the areas identified for improvement in the inspection report. The school did not respond appropriately to the local authority's statement of action and improvement plans were not amended. Leaders did not take concerted action to address the key issues and governors did not hold leaders to close account. Consequently, the new leadership team have had to act rapidly in order to compensate for lost time.

The executive headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has brought much-needed direction, purpose and a sense of urgency to the school. A thorough plan is now in place. As it builds upon the local authority's statement of action and links closely to the teaching school support plan, coherent and timely action is planned and improvements are taking pace.

The school's action plan contains clear, relevant and specific action to address all the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection. Success criteria and challenging, yet realistic, milestones are included within it. The plan identifies who is responsible for leading and monitoring actions but the executive headteacher and the head of school are identified as the people with most of this responsibility. Senior leaders must take action to allow more members of the school's staff to be able to carry out such activities. A clearer leadership structure, with sharply defined roles and additional training, where required, would address this. The school's leadership structure needs to be reviewed to ensure that it is robust enough to drive rapid improvement.

More work of better quality is now evident in pupils' books. Marking is also leading to improved progress, indicating that teaching is beginning to improve. Action taken by senior leaders has led to this improvement, for example, the executive headteacher has provided training and support through Manor Teaching School Alliance and the deputy headteacher has put systems in place to improve planning. As senior leaders look at books and visit classrooms on a regular basis, they have a realistic understanding of the strengths and areas for development of teaching and they have clear plans to improve it further.

School leaders have taken action to improve pupils' safety. Absence is followed up more rigorously, pupils are now closely supervised at lunchtime and clutter has been removed from inside the building. However, the school does not yet have all its policies in place and the school's website is not fit for purpose. Action must be taken by the end of term in order to address these issues.

The school now has a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics and an audit of the outdoor area for the children in Nursery and Reception has taken place. As a result, the local authority has agreed to remove the unusable mobile classroom and to ensure that the outdoor area is a safe and secure space for Reception children to learn and play. It is important that this work takes place over the summer holiday so that it does not disrupt learning.

Governance has been strengthened by the addition of three new local authority governors. They have the skills and experience to support and challenge senior leaders and hold them to close account. The establishment of an Interim Strategic Group, with clear terms of reference, has also improved the school's leadership.

The local authority has taken decisive action since the inspection in February 2015. They appointed the executive headteacher, brokered support from Manor School Teaching Alliance and have provided three members of the governing body. A local authority officer visits regularly and reviews aspects of the school's work in order to monitor progress against school priorities and suggest further action. The local authority has also provided safety and financial audits which have been used to improve these aspects of the school's work.

The local authority's action plan sets out a clear timescale by which they expect the school to improve. It includes actions to address all areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report and clearly shows who is responsible for carrying out, monitoring and evaluating these actions. The plan has regular milestones so senior leaders, members of the governing body and local authority officers can check that the school is moving to 'good' within the desired timeframe.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is 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 Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector