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12 June 2015

Mrs Penelope Webb
Headteacher
ARK Rose Primary Academy
Tees Grove
Kings Norton
Birmingham
B38 9DH

Dear Mrs Webb

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of ARK Rose Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 11 June 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in May 2014. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham and the Director of Primary Education for ARK schools.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm

Additional Inspector

The post-inspection letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body or equivalent
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For academies [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in lessons, especially more-able pupils
 - ensuring that pupils with special educational needs are provided with the support that they need to enable them to make as much progress as their classmates
 - teaching pupils to form letters correctly so that they write more fluently and confidently
 - consistently demonstrating high expectations for pupils' work
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides children with precise advice to improve their writing
 - developing teachers' knowledge in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that they can plan appropriate activities for children to practise what they have learnt.

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - employing a staff team of permanent teachers and teaching assistants
 - ensuring a robust induction for newly appointed subject leaders so that they quickly take responsibility for their areas of expertise
 - ensuring that better provision is made to help those who are behind to catch up
 - building the knowledge and confidence of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader so that the academy is consistently able to offer good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes
 - communicating improvements in the academy affectively to parents
 - ensuring that provision for the small minority of pupils whose behaviour remains challenging matches their needs and enables them to be successful in their learning and make accelerated progress
 - developing the academy library so that pupils have access to a better range of materials
 - reducing late arrivals so that no pupils arrive at the academy late unless for a legitimate reason.

An external review of governance and the academy's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 11 June 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, members of the senior leadership team, the lead teacher for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and a group of pupils. The inspector held a telephone conversation with the Director of Primary Education from ARK (the academy sponsor). The inspector observed six lessons jointly with different middle managers. Documents summarising actions since the previous monitoring inspection were reviewed, including reports by ARK consultants.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the assistant headteacher has changed her responsibilities and has become the leader responsible for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. A new assistant headteacher has been appointed and will take up her post in September 2015. Since the previous monitoring inspection visit, a Year 5 teacher has left the academy and has not been replaced. The academy has reorganised the staffing for Years 3, 4 and 5 to ensure continuity of teaching in Year 5. From September, the academy will have almost a full complement of permanent staff.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and senior leadership team have consolidated well many of the initiatives that were relatively new at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. As a result, teachers are now very clear about how they will be held to account and what is required to enable pupils to make faster progress in their learning. Middle leaders, such as those responsible for subjects, better understand their roles and responsibilities. They find the process of monitoring the quality of teaching particularly informative and valuable in improving their approaches to planning and marking. All teachers now use the academy's detailed assessment information to check on pupils' progress and to identify quickly when more individual support is required. As a consequence, almost all pupils are now making better progress than at the time of the section 5 inspection. However, the progress of some pupils in Year 2 remains slower than in other year groups. The academy has done well to ensure gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils are either closed or are closing rapidly. The process of training new teachers has been made more rigorous, and the academy knows that this is crucial if teachers who take up post in September are to contribute effectively to the current improvements.

The governing body continues to improve its checks on the academy's performance. It has strengthened the way individual governors make visits to lessons and how it carries out reviews of other aspects of the academy's performance. As a consequence governors are having a bigger impact on helping the academy to make

the required improvements, especially in relation to accelerating the progress made by disadvantaged pupils.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The changes to staffing have strengthened the capacity of the senior leadership team to address the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection, particularly in relation to the leadership of special educational needs. As a consequence, action plans are implemented more rigorously and with greater impact in terms of accelerating pupils' progress.
- Leaders effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. The academy's evaluations indicate that there is no inadequate teaching.
- Middle leaders, such as those in charge of subjects, have grown in confidence in their roles. They effectively monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching in the areas for which they have responsibility.
- Better behaviour management approaches are leading to a calmer atmosphere in lessons and around the academy. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that behaviour is much better than in the past.
- Leaders' effective approach to promoting good attendance and tackling absence has led to pupils' attendance increasing this year. Although punctuality remains an issue for some pupils, many more now arrive on time to school.
- Leaders have changed the way mathematics is taught so that teachers have more success in developing pupils' numeracy and problem solving skills, especially in the early years and Year 1.
- The academy's use of assessment information continues to improve, and all teachers are now confident in using data to track the progress made by individual pupils as well as groups of pupils. The results show that disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs are making much better progress than they had been at the time of the section 5 inspection.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Teachers do not always ask pupils questions effectively to check and deepen their understanding. In some lessons the questions are directed at only a small range of pupils. As a consequence too many pupils are not involved in their learning and lose concentration. Some teachers still do not allow enough time for pupils to respond, and instead tend to answer for the pupils.
- The effectiveness of lesson planning is inconsistent. This is a particular weakness where plans do not indicate clearly how learning in one lesson feeds into others, or how pupils are expected to build up their understanding and learning.
- Teachers' marking in subjects and topics other than literacy does not always pay enough attention to improving the quality of pupils' writing and handwriting. In addition, teachers do not consistently tell pupils how to overcome errors and improve their work.
- Subject leaders do not use the same recording template as senior leaders when monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. As a result, this leads to inconsistencies in the way subject leaders evaluate the lessons they observe.

External support

The good links made with a nearby ARK academy continue to help ARK Rose to strengthen its improvement approaches and strategies. The ARK consultants regularly and rigorously review the academy's progress and performance. The academy's leaders value the resulting reports and guidance, which combine high-level challenge with appropriate support.