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Mr Martin McCusker
Headteacher
Temple Mill Primary School
Cliffe Road
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Rochester
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Dear Mr McCusker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Temple Mill Primary School

Following my visit with Abigail Birch, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 20–21 October 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 third 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 taking effective action 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 Interim Executive Board 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 third monitoring inspection on 20–21 October 2015

Evidence

The inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class. One observation was carried out jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors met with the headteacher, the early years leader, the inclusion manager, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, two groups of pupils, a group of teachers, the home-school worker, three members of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority. There were too few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), but the inspectors spoke informally to parents at the school gate and at the Year 2 sharing afternoon. The inspectors also attended an assembly, looked at pupils' workbooks and heard pupils read. The inspectors considered: the minutes of the interim executive board; information about pupils' progress; the school's action plans; 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 assistant headteacher started in September 2015, with responsibility for the Year 4 class together with a job-share partner. The Year 6 teacher left in October 2015. The headteacher is teaching this class along with a higher-level teaching assistant until a replacement teacher is appointed. The inclusion manager retires at the end of December 2015. A second assistant headteacher has been appointed to start in January 2016 and will take on the role of inclusion manager. There is a new Chair of the Interim Executive Board. The school is on track to convert to an academy on 1 December 2015, as part of The Howard Academy Trust.

Outcomes for pupils

Evidence in pupils' books and in lessons indicates that standards are starting to improve in reading, writing and mathematics in most classes. This is because expectations are higher and work is better matched to pupils' needs. However, leaders acknowledge that there is more to do to ensure all pupils achieve their full potential.

Standards in the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters represent) screening check in 2015 were above the national average. These pupils were well prepared for Year 2. The teaching of letters and sounds continues to be strong. In a phonics session observed during the inspection, Year 1 pupils were able to sound out words such as 'suspicious', showing a high level of achievement for their age.

Pupils in Year 6 in July 2015 attained in line with the national average in mathematics and reading, but remained below the national average in writing. This

matches the school's predictions at the last monitoring inspection. Standards in all three subjects improved compared to 2014. However, pupils in Year 2 in July 2015 did less well than the school expected. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were significantly below those for Year 2 pupils nationally. Leaders are rightly targeting extra support to these pupils now they are in Year 3.

The most-able Year 6 pupils attained above the national average in reading, and significantly above the national average in mathematics. Standards in writing remained below the national average for these pupils. In Year 2, the most-able pupils attained below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 made progress in line with their classmates. However, these pupils had lower starting points: they did not make the more rapid progress needed in order to close the gap. In Year 2, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers increased. Leaders and governors recognise the need to target extra help more effectively so that these pupils catch up to where they should be.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Stronger leadership has helped to improve the quality of teaching. The headteacher uses his 'weekly wonder' assemblies effectively to showcase good-quality pupils' work. This sets a high standard to which everyone now aspires. In addition, the new list of 'non-negotiables' in the staff handbook means that teachers all know what is required of them. As a result, teachers have higher expectations of pupils, and pupils have higher expectations of themselves. As one pupil showed his work to an inspector, he explained, 'I put my whole effort into it.'

The school's marking scheme is displayed prominently in each classroom for easy reference by pupils and adults. Teachers' feedback to pupils shows them what to improve and there are regular opportunities for pupils to reflect upon their learning and make corrections. Some teachers offer extra challenges to consolidate and deepen pupils' understanding, which helps them make faster progress. This good practice is not seen in all classes, but there is a growing consistency across the school.

The recently adopted system of 'pre-assessment' in mathematics enables teachers to check what pupils already know before planning lessons. Work is more usually set at the right level of challenge and extra support is provided if pupils are unsure. As a result, pupils are starting to make better progress. Pupils agree the new system works well. One pupil who was supported with a difficult task said, 'Yesterday I didn't understand; today it is quite easy for me.'

The new curriculum launched in September 2015 provides a cohesive link across subjects. Pupils can see the purpose of their learning and there are more

opportunities to practise key skills. For example, pupils tackle letter-writing in history, as part of their work on Romans. Pupils say the 'new, fresh topics' inspire them to write more. Most work is now collected in a single book. This reminds pupils to aim for the same quantity and quality of work in foundation subjects as they achieve in literacy or mathematics lessons.

Pupils recognise the benefit of all these changes. One Year 6 pupil said, 'I wish the school had always been like this'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

There is a new system of pupil leadership. This offers older pupils useful opportunities to take on responsibilities such as welcoming visitors and leading assembly. Prefects, house captains and the head boy and girl provide excellent role models to younger pupils and support them well, for example assisting at wet playtimes. This work helps pupils to develop good communication skills and confidence in readiness for secondary school.

Pupils feel safe and secure. They know who to go to if they are upset, and those spoken to were unaware of any bullying. They are taught to understand the difference between right and wrong, and the new behaviour policy encourages them to behave well. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong and this helps pupils to be confident as individuals and as learners. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good, because they are motivated by their work; this helps them to concentrate well.

Staff have received recent training about important aspects of safeguarding and know the procedures to follow in case of a concern. The school site is secure and appropriate risk assessments are in place. High supervision levels ensure lunchtime is well managed, and pupils move calmly around the school. Parents say their children are happy and well cared for in school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher has developed a strong team spirit among the staff. He has high standards, but staff also know he 'will always have an open door' if they need support to achieve well. His robust leadership helps them pull together to make the necessary changes, driving improvement more quickly.

There is better communication between leaders and the rest of the staff team. Everyone now knows what is happening across the school and this allows them to share good ideas to strengthen teaching. The headteacher has raised expectations about the amount of work pupils should produce and the quality of their presentation. As a result, all pupils and staff are aiming higher and the standard of work is improving.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics have a higher profile and staff know they can turn to them for advice. They have made important changes, such as a more structured approach to guided reading sessions and the introduction of 'pre-assessment' in mathematics. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of this work.

Leaders and teachers check more carefully how well individual pupils achieve, but there is not a clear overview of progress across the school. The school's system to track the progress of vulnerable groups is at an early stage of development. Consequently, there is too little analysis of how well each group performs, compared with other pupils in the school and nationally, to target support effectively. Leaders are developing systems to use information more widely to ensure pupils always get the right help to make more rapid progress.

Governors have a good grasp of how well the school is doing because they visit regularly to see for themselves. Their work to get the right staff team in place is starting to pay off, but they know there is more to do to raise standards for all pupils and especially those who are disadvantaged. They have ensured that the school is ready to become part of The Howard Academy Trust on 1 December 2015.

External support

The local authority offers strong support. There are regular visits to check standards and assist the new headteacher in work such as action planning. The early years consultant continues to deliver useful advice. Work with staff at Cedar Park School has helped teachers to check their judgements about how well pupils are doing when they assess pupils' work. The Howard School continues to provide beneficial support from specialist teachers in English, mathematics and art.