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23 November 2015

Mrs A Cliff
Executive Headteacher
Hill Avenue Primary School
Hill Avenue
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Wolverhampton
WV4 6PY

Dear Mrs Cliff

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hill Avenue Primary School

Following my visit with Alun Williams, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 November 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 February 2015. 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 Wolverhampton.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015

- Improve the quality of teaching so that inadequate teaching is quickly eradicated and all teaching is at least consistently good in all subjects by making sure that:
 - teachers know how to assess accurately what pupils already know
 - teachers use their assessments to plan work that will build on what pupils can do to deepen their understanding further
 - teachers use their assessments to fill gaps in learning which have resulted from previously inadequate teaching
 - the teaching of phonics in the early years is consistent in its organisation and effectiveness and that older pupils are encouraged to use their phonics skills when trying to read unfamiliar words
 - pupils solve problems for themselves and are able to use the information that is available to them more readily, rather than relying on other adults for help
 - teachers' subject knowledge of mathematics is developed further.
- Secure further improvements to leadership and management of the school by making sure that:
 - all leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and have high enough expectations so that improvements are driven quickly
 - the checks on learning in books and in classrooms, which have been recently introduced, continue and clear targets are set for teachers which become a focus for future checks on their work
 - action is taken to check rigorously on pupils' attendance and follow up any concerns.
- Significantly improve governance by taking immediate action to:
 - make sure that all governors have the necessary skills to enable them to use and challenge the information that is given to them so that leaders are held to account
 - carry out a review of how well the school keeps pupils healthy and safe while on the school site and take immediate action to address any concerns raised, such as improving lunchtime supervision and staff training
 - address all improvement areas previously identified by the reviews of governance and the use of pupil premium with a greater sense of urgency.
- Make arrangements for pupils in Nursery and Reception to have access to suitable space for outdoor play to allow them to practise activities such as balancing, climbing, racing and chasing games so that their physical development is not constrained.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 November 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other leaders and teachers, groups of pupils, the Chair of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.

During the inspection, 38 responses to Parent View were considered, and parents, pupils and staff were spoken to on an informal basis. Pupils' work was looked at and the school's information about the progress currently being made by pupils in the school was analysed.

Context

The head of school began working at the school in May 2015 and an interim executive board replaced the governing body in June 2015. Two teachers left the school in August 2015 and, as part of a reshaped staffing structure, a new teacher joined in September 2015. Two new teachers will join the school in January 2016.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's internal information, which has been externally moderated, and the work in pupils' books and on display around the school indicate improved progress throughout the school. Pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities, are now making sustained progress in a range of subjects. The progress made by Year 4 pupils in reading is particularly rapid.

Poor teaching in the past means that pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 need to make accelerated progress in order to reach the outcomes of which they are capable. There is evidence of this in every year group, but many Year 6 pupils are still not achieving at the appropriate level for their age. School leaders have plans in place to address this issue but actions have not yet allowed these pupils to make up for lost ground.

Outcomes for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils in 2015 were well below the national average. Too few pupils made the progress expected of them in Key Stage 2 and the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally was wide. School leaders are now taking effective action to close this gap.

In 2015, outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage compared more favourably to national figures than those at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The

proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 was above the national figure and all disadvantaged pupils reached the expected standard in phonics. The good practice that was developed last year is being built on to ensure that children and pupils currently in the school continue progress well.

Pupils of all abilities read widely and often. They are encouraged to read in school and at home and those with whom I spoke told me that they enjoyed reading. More-able readers are able to read fluently and with expression and less confident readers can use the sounds that letters make in order to decipher words.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated but inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain. For example, in some lessons, pupils are beginning to use the information that is available to them to solve problems but in others they seek adult help before attempting to tackle more challenging activities. Most pupils are very keen to learn and there has been a clear drive to develop the independence of pupils, but some staff and a few pupils are yet to fully embrace this.

In the most effective lessons, teachers and teaching assistants work well together to facilitate rapid progress. The lessons are carefully planned and staff use questions well to develop pupils' understanding. All staff follow the school's effective marking policy and this has helped improve standards. However, the quality of work in mathematics is not as good as in other areas, indicating that teaching and subject knowledge in this area needs to develop further.

As a result of training and moderation, the accuracy of assessment has improved. Teachers now have access to accurate information on what pupils already know and they are using this to fill gaps in learning and deepen pupils' understanding. However, this is not yet being done consistently as some teachers spend a great deal of time going through things that the pupils already know while others do not give pupils enough time to consolidate their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are keen to learn, they take pride in their work and their books are well looked after. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and other children.

Pupils behaved extremely well during the course of this visit. They were polite, sensible and courteous and told inspectors that behaviour was improving, there was no bullying and that they felt safe. Pupils behaved well in class and at breaktime and lunchtime. They entered the school building after social time in a very orderly manner.

School leaders have taken effective action to improve attendance so it is now above the national average. Raising the profile of the importance of regular attendance, greeting the pupils when they arrive at school and working with families and outside agencies to remove barriers to regular attendance have led to improved attendance for all groups.

Early Years Foundation Stage

The teaching of phonics in the early years is well organised and effective. The environment has improved; for example, children now have access to a suitable space for outdoor activity which has allowed them to enhance their physical development. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is beginning to build on these improvements in order to create a coherent phase and secure consistently good teaching and improved outcomes for all children.

Effectiveness of leadership in and management

Leadership and management has improved considerably and changes that were being made at the time of the last visit are embedding. Senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and have high expectations of the staff and the pupils. Consequently, they are driving rapid improvement.

School leaders lead by example, they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and enjoy positive relationships with staff and pupils. Subject and phase leaders are supporting improvements and plans are in place to develop their roles further.

Robust procedures for managing the performance of teachers are now evident. The teachers' standards inform teachers' targets, which focus upon improving teaching and pupils' outcomes. A thorough, targeted professional development programme is supporting this process.

The school curriculum provides linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, artistic, physical, social, moral, spiritual and cultural opportunities for pupils. Classroom-based activities are enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities including well-attended clubs which focus upon problem solving, reading, science and art. 'Press Gang', which allows pupils to develop skills in research, putting together information and presenting it in the form of a newspaper, is helping to develop the literacy skills of a number of pupils.

School leaders are taking effective action to ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements keep pupils safe. Up-to-date policies, which make reference to the most recent guidance, are in place and available to parents on the school website.

Staff have received appropriate information about how to keep pupils safe. They have attended relevant safeguarding training covering e-safety, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Consequently, they know how to act if they have concerns about a young person's welfare.

Well-organised, written records are stored securely and referrals made to the designated safeguarding lead are dealt with effectively. School leaders work closely with the local authority to ensure that all pupils are safe, referrals are made promptly and children missing education protocols are followed.

Parental engagement is improving. Parents receive fortnightly newsletters, meet with class teachers on a termly basis and are invited in to school to see class assemblies and to see their children receive awards. A parent teacher association was formed in October 2015 and the school's vastly improved website has enhanced communication with parents. However, school leaders acknowledge that they need to develop this relationship further.

Additional government funding was not used well in the past but school leaders have taken action to address this. Primary sports funding is now being used effectively to provide sports coaching, staff development and increased opportunities for pupils to enjoy a range of sporting activities. For example, all pupils can take part in football, netball, tennis, swimming, mixed martial arts, karate and athletics. The after-school clubs and the regular physical education lessons have significantly increased participation in sporting activities. To complement this, pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles particularly through personal, social, health and citizenship education.

Pupil premium funding is now having a greater impact. Action such as ensuring that each disadvantaged pupil has a personal action plan, receives targeted support and has access to additional resources has led to disadvantaged pupils making more rapid progress during this school year. Consequently, gaps in achievement are beginning to close.

Members of the interim executive board have the skills, knowledge and understanding to hold senior leaders to account. Minutes of their meetings indicate that they are given accurate and detailed information about all aspects of the school's work, which they are able to use to support and challenge the school's leaders.

External support

The school is receiving high-quality support from the Manor Teaching School Alliance. The executive headteacher of Hill Avenue Primary School is a national leader of education and the headteacher of Manor Primary Teaching School. She has

provided strong and effective leadership of the school and has worked closely with the head of school and other senior leaders to drive improvements. National, local and specialist leaders of education from the teaching school alliance have helped to develop leadership at all levels. They have also provided coaching and training that has led to action to address the areas for improvement identified in the last Ofsted report. For example, members of the teaching school alliance supported the staff in the school to secure the improved outcomes in phonics last year. They assessed the starting points of children, provided training and resources, implemented a scheme of work, modelled the delivery of the teaching of phonics and taught with staff from Hill Avenue Primary School in order to improve practice. This established a sustainable model within the school.

Staff from Hill Avenue Primary School have benefited from input at joint training days and by taking part in the teaching school alliance's outstanding teaching and good teaching programmes. These activities have helped to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. The impact of teaching assistants has improved as a result of tailored training provided by the alliance, and moderation and support in the use of information about pupils' progress has allowed leaders at Hill Avenue Primary School to have a clear and accurate understanding of the pupils' progress and has informed action to accelerate achievement. This has contributed to improved progress across the school.

The local authority has provided effective support to the school. The link officer visits the school regularly and has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Since the last monitoring visit she, along with the local authority officer with responsibility for schools causing concern, has led two reviews of the work of the school. These reviews take place in collaboration with staff from the school and provide developmental opportunities for school leaders at all levels. The detailed reports which are produced after the reviews give an accurate picture of the school and provide useful recommendations. Progress against these recommendations and the Ofsted areas for improvement are monitored and the process has confirmed school leaders' view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

School leaders value the support they receive from the local authority's human resources department. The local authority has also helped the school to make improvements to the school building. For example, they fitted new fire doors and removed an unusable mobile classroom which allowed school leaders to provide Nursery and Reception children with a suitable outdoor area.