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Mrs Vivienne Cranton
Headteacher
Fairfield Community Primary School
Carnforth Drive
Worcester
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Dear Mrs Cranton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Fairfield Community Primary School

Following my visit with Lynda Townsend, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18–19 November, 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 January 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:

Leaders and managers are 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Worcester Local Authority.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach essential skills in reading, writing and mathematics well
 - teachers plan and teach logical sequences of lessons which take account of pupils' previous learning and develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in each subject
 - the tasks in each lesson meet the needs of all pupils, including the most able and those with disabilities and special educational needs
 - teachers' feedback, both written and verbal, helps to move pupils on in their learning
 - all teachers use teaching assistants effectively so that they have a positive impact on pupils' progress in every lesson.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring that all pupils know how they are expected to behave in lessons in order to learn successfully, and all staff consistently and positively reinforce this
 - minimising the use of physical intervention and exclusion by developing a broader range of strategies to support pupils with more complex and challenging behaviour and checking that all staff apply these strategies consistently
 - ensuring that staff on duty at lunchtime act as role models and teach good manners and social skills.

- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - making clear to families the links between attendance and achievement
 - promoting and rewarding good attendance
 - eliminating the use of part-time timetables for pupils.

- Improve the quality of teaching and provision in the Reception class so that it is at least good and ensure that children's safety is given the highest priority.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders use their knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in teaching to prioritise training and support for teachers so that they all develop the skills that they need to be effective
 - regularly producing a succinct analysis of the progress that different classes and groups are making in reading, writing and mathematics and ensuring that leaders and governors understand how this compares to achievement nationally

- analysing information about behaviour incidents, exclusions, physical intervention and pupils' attendance so that patterns and trends are identified and variations for different groups are spotted so that appropriate action can be taken
- ensuring that child protection concerns, and the actions taken by the school, are carefully documented and that staff follow the clear guidance in the school safeguarding policy about when referrals should be made to the local authority
- ensuring that governors develop the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities and provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18–19 November 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two governor representatives, subject leaders, the coordinator for special educational needs, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The two acting headteachers at the time of the previous monitoring inspection were replaced by an interim headteacher in September. A permanent deputy headteacher, Nursery teacher and Reception teacher also joined the school at the beginning of the autumn term. Pupils initially found it difficult to adjust to the considerable staff changes. The immediate actions taken by the acting headteacher swiftly brought about the necessary stability. She quickly communicated her clear expectations and introduced systems that helped to establish consistency and direction.

School leaders and local authority representatives continue to be at an early stage of discussions with the Department for Education regarding future sponsored academy status.

Outcomes for pupils

A high proportion of children enter the Reception class with significant gaps in their knowledge and skills for their age. Less than half of the children achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception year. The proportion of pupils achieving the Year 1 phonics check (the sounds that letters represent) did not improve in 2015 and remained below average. Girls in Year 1 performed less well than boys.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 remain below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Key Stage 2 standards remain below average in reading and writing and significantly below national figures in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling. Too few of the most-able pupils achieve the higher levels by the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2. Disadvantaged pupils remain well below other pupils nationally. The proportion of pupils making expected or more than expected progress is well below national figures in all subjects. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make slow progress from their different starting points. There are considerable gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills because of prolonged underachievement in the past.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers know what leaders expect of them and most work hard to act on the considerable advice and training provided. The school is at an early stage of development, therefore recent changes have led to limited impact on current pupils' progress and staff performance. A new phonics scheme was introduced to early years and Key Stage 1 in September. Staff now apply regular, consistent and systematic approaches, which show early signs of success. The children and pupils enjoy their sessions and are keen to replicate sounds precisely and write letters accurately. They are already beginning to correctly apply their knowledge to spelling and writing tasks.

In classes where pupils make effective progress in lessons, teachers explained new ideas well and regularly checked pupils' understanding. In these lessons, teachers demonstrated clear and appropriate subject-related vocabulary, which pupils adopted correctly in their spoken responses and written exercises. In one class where pupils made recent impressive progress in their writing, the teacher showed consistently high expectations of every pupil. She knew each of the incremental steps needed for pupils to achieve specific goals. She successfully inspired and challenged pupils' thinking so that they effectively interacted, engaged and responded to purposeful set tasks. As a consequence, all pupils were committed to succeeding, they demonstrated high self-esteem and remained alert, interested and self-motivated.

In too many classes, teachers' expectations of pupils were too low. Lessons were insufficiently focused on purposeful learning and activities failed to help pupils acquire, reinforce or practise necessary skills. As a consequence, pupils applied a limited range of punctuation to their written work, repeated simple spelling errors and presented their work carelessly. In mathematics, pupils experience a narrow curriculum of calculation but have little knowledge of measure or the properties of shape. They are given too few opportunities to solve mathematical problems. As a result, the pupils do not appreciate how mathematics is applied in everyday life. Pupils' progress within subjects was hindered further by teachers' ineffective or inaccurate assessments. Teachers' written feedback to pupils is extensive but not followed up.

Children in the early years classes are confident and well settled. They know the daily routines and classrooms are prepared with a broad range of activities. However, the activities do not build on secure learning and fail to sustain the children's interest. In one session, the children wandered aimlessly between activities and missed out on opportunities to learn and practise essential skills. They were keen to seek the teacher's attention because they knew she would ask interesting questions, lead their inquisitiveness and help them to explain and explore. The children chose the teacher's company because they were keen to learn.

Teachers do not always deploy teaching assistants effectively. As a result, assistants are unsure how to support pupils, reinforce their learning or deepen their understanding. Teaching assistants do not consistently take charge of pupils' learning, identify misconceptions or help pupils to correct errors. Some adults fail to intervene even when pupils have clearly given up and become bored. Other assistants work constructively to deepen pupils' thinking, keep pupils on task and regularly check pupils' understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Attendance is improving but remains below the national average. The deputy headteacher meets regularly with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss concerns, and incidents of persistent absence are reported to the Education Investigation Services. Weekly newsletters and assemblies celebrate the class with the highest attendance and punctuality. Pupils enjoy the half-termly rewards and trips for full attendance.

Pupils generally settle well to work and display positive attitudes to learning. They listen attentively during lessons and are able to ignore the very occasional distraction when a pupil calls out or inappropriately seeks attention. Pupils contributed their ideas to the behaviour policy and advised leaders on meaningful rewards and sanctions. As a result, the vast majority of pupils want to behave, show keen levels of mutual respect and are polite. Pupils who used to attend the on-site learning support unit have, in the main, integrated well into classes. They quickly learned to help each other and enjoyed the interaction with teachers and other pupils. Pupils who experience behavioural difficulties increasingly understand adults' expectations and boundaries. On the rare occasions when physical intervention is required, the event is recorded appropriately.

Pupils play cooperatively during playtimes but would appreciate more organised games and resources. They believe behaviour in school has improved because of the consistent way teachers and pupils apply the behaviour policy. They know about different forms of bullying and they are confident that any such incident or name calling will be promptly investigated and resolved. Lunchtimes are now split for different ages to provide higher levels of supervision.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher and substantive deputy headteacher appreciate that much needs to be done within a short timescale. They are suitably determined and ambitious for the school's success. The headteacher's experience and expertise are valuable assets to the school. The headteacher quickly identified priorities, delegated leadership responsibilities and provided training and support for staff where needed.

The headteacher introduced new systems for tracking and recording pupils' progress. In addition, senior leaders examine pupils' books and have regular meetings with teachers to consider pupils' progress. As a result, gaps in pupils' learning are now more quickly recognised and steps for improvement identified. Senior leaders provide regular and detailed feedback for teachers' ongoing improvement.

School leaders have updated the school's safeguarding policy and provided training for all staff.

The recently appointed early years leader has rightly identified the need for focused teaching in Nursery and Reception classes so that children learn and apply the necessary skills for their age. She is eager to identify structured and sequential lessons to develop planned activities and reinforce learned skills.

Substantial support has been provided over time for the coordinator of special educational needs. The analysis of pupils' needs and the provision of targeted support with the right level of expertise lacks sufficient rigour. The process of accurately assessing pupils' progress and amending support accordingly remains insecure.

The subject leaders for English and mathematics have received support from the local authority and headteacher in analysing pupils' progress and attainment. They are at an early stage of their development in these roles but they are taking initial steps to review pupils' work and identify short-term priorities. Subject leaders confirmed that they and teachers are increasingly aware of their accountability in securing pupils' rates of progress and helping them to achieve higher standards. They have built contacts with other schools for ongoing support.

The new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed in September and lost no time in drawing up an action plan for governors in response to the review of governance. Governors are now sharply focused on the school's areas for improvement and they actively seek out and attend relevant training to sharpen their skills. For example, a group of governors received training in reading and analysing published school performance data to establish independent views and rely less on what they were told by school leaders. New committees were established in September to ensure a closer scrutiny of pupils' progress and keep track of the quality of teaching. Governors are suitably aware of the school's short-term priorities and know how to keep track of improvements. They are actively seeking ways to identify, extend and capitalise on governors' expertise.

External support

The local authority ensured the appointment of the acting headteacher and has continued to provide substantial support for individual teachers and inexperienced

staff. Training has also continued for whole staff issues. Two learning support advisers and a serving headteacher conducted a recent evaluation of the school's progress. Advisers know the school well and rightly have confidence in the current headteacher and deputy headteacher to drive improvements forward.