

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

**T:** 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Mrs Debbi Flowerdew  
Interim Executive Headteacher  
Elm Tree Community Primary School  
Ranworth Avenue  
Lowestoft  
NR33 9HN

Dear Mrs Flowerdew

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Elm Tree Community Primary School**

Following my visit with Robert Greatrex, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 24–25 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 March 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 Suffolk County Council.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2015**

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - eradicating weak teaching that impedes pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics
  - planning interesting lessons that stimulate learning and make pupils think and persevere
  - making sure that the pitch of learning in lessons stretches pupils
  - effectively deploying teaching assistants so that pupils are supported with timely and targeted intervention
  - ensuring that the evidence in pupils' books illustrates that pupils make good progress over time, work hard, and apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways.
- Raise achievement by:
  - rapidly increasing the numbers of pupils who make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics, so pupils achieve at least as well as others nationally by the end of Key Stage 2
  - urgently raising the achievement of the disadvantaged and most vulnerable pupils in the school to close the gap with other pupils
  - ensuring that all staff provide precise support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so they can achieve the best they can
  - providing greater challenge for the most-able pupils so they can exceed national expectations in all subjects
  - consolidating the use of the newly reviewed procedures for teaching phonics, to enable more pupils to achieve well in reading at Year 1
  - improving the accuracy and use of school assessment data so that staff focus more sharply on how well pupils are learning and the progress they are making
  - using teaching assistants more effectively when supporting pupils in lessons and teaching individual pupils to enable them to make good progress.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - rigorously checking and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, and taking prompt action when it is not good enough
  - undertaking a thorough and rigorous self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school
  - robustly hold all staff to account for raising the achievement of all pupils
  - providing high-quality training for all staff and managers so they can undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively
  - ensuring that leaders are in place to drive improvements in all key stages and subjects

- analysing and using accurate assessment data effectively to raise the achievement of all groups of pupils.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 24–25 November 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim executive headteacher, other members of staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative of the local authority. The lead inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke to parents on the playground.

### **Context**

The substantive headteacher left the school at the end of the last academic year and an interim executive headteacher joined Elm Tree in September. The interim executive headteacher is employed on a part-time contract and is usually in school daily – either for the morning or the afternoon. A business manager has been seconded from a local Evolution Academy Trust school to replace members of the office staff who have left the school. Six teachers left the school at the end of the last academic year and eight new teachers joined in September, including three agency staff.

A sponsor has now been found for the school and an agreement in principle has been reached. The school expects to become an academy, sponsored by Evolution Academy Trust, on 1 March 2016.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Statutory assessment in 2015 shows an improving picture overall. Pupils achieved well in the phonics screening check (a statutory assessment of Year 1 pupils' knowledge of the relationships between letters and sounds). The proportion who reached the expected level was much higher than in 2014 and in line with the national average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 was also better in 2015 and results in the Year 6 national tests were broadly in line with the national average overall. However, although the 2015 results were much better than 2014, pupils' attainment in the spelling and grammar test remained well below the national average. Although progress overall remains significantly below average, it was much improved in 2015.

Since September, the deputy headteacher has taken a firm lead on assessment. A new assessment scheme has been introduced and has given the school a clear baseline from which to measure pupils' ongoing progress. Plans are in place to ensure the accuracy of these assessments through a comprehensive programme of moderation organised by the Evolution Academy Trust.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

There has been a significant change of teaching staff since the first monitoring visit and the school remains reliant on agency staff. Formal and less formal lesson observations have been carried out throughout the school, giving the school's leaders a clear picture of where the strengths and weaknesses lie. Teachers have been provided with support by both local authority consultants and coaches from the Evolution Academy Trust. It is too soon to see the impact of this on pupils' outcomes but staff morale is rising and the atmosphere in the school is much more positive.

The school's leaders have reviewed a number of relevant policies, such as the presentation policy, and this is starting to have an impact. The homework policy has been reviewed and a new system implemented. Parents told the lead inspector that homework is now more frequent and more interesting. They also value receiving more regular feedback on the homework their children complete.

Although outcomes in the phonics screening check improved in 2015, the school has responded quickly to their own concerns about the overall quality of phonics teaching to ensure that these results are sustained. A new scheme for teaching phonics has been introduced and evidence was seen during the inspection of pupils developing and applying their developing knowledge at an appropriate level.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Although much of the behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, there is too much that is not. In lessons, there is too much low-level disruption and, around the school, pupils are sometimes rowdy and do not follow the rules. Pupils told the lead inspector that their lessons are sometimes disrupted by other pupils' behaviour. The school's leaders are aware of this and have already started to put measures in place to improve behaviour. A new behaviour policy has been written and a new procedure introduced. It is vital now that all staff apply the behaviour policy consistently at all times and that the whole staff team (both teachers and support staff) take collegiate responsibility for addressing undesirable behaviour.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

Although she has been in post for a very short time, the interim executive headteacher is already having a clear impact on the school. Parents, pupils and staff were all keen to tell the lead inspector that the school has a new sense of direction since she came into post. The interim executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher are already an effective team and they are tackling the school's areas for improvement with appropriate urgency.

The interim executive headteacher has, quite rightly, focused her efforts on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school. She has taken decisive

action to tackle the weakest teaching and is continuing to address teaching that falls short of her expectations. The interim executive headteacher is aware that the school's action plan needs further work in order to be fit for purpose.

The school does not currently have a special educational needs coordinator and the deputy headteacher is 'caretaking' the role in the short term. Although the deputy headteacher is doing this capably, it is important that a suitably-qualified person is employed to fulfil this role as soon as possible.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing satisfactory support to the school in the form of visits from consultants and from a standards and excellence adviser. The local authority is attempting to source a suitable person to provide support for the school in the absence of a special educational needs coordinator. This is an important action that needs to remain a priority.

### **The school should take further action to:**

- eradicate low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons and ensure good behaviour around the school by ensuring that:
  - the new behaviour procedure is implemented consistently at all times
  - all staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour
  - all staff share the responsibility for monitoring and addressing pupils' behaviour.
- ensure that a suitably qualified and experienced special educational needs coordinator is employed as a matter of urgency.