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17 December 2015

Mr Paul Smith
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Smith

Special measures monitoring inspection of Springfield Primary School

Following my visit with Janet Baker, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 December 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2015.

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

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- In order to ensure pupils achieve well in all year groups, improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and better by making sure that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement and plan activities that are suitably challenging for the most-able pupils, those that are disabled and have special educational needs, and those that are in the early stages of learning to speak English
 - activities in all subjects help pupils to practise, extend or learn new skills
 - activities in the Nursery are purposeful and move children's learning on
 - all staff include girls in class discussions and give them time to respond to questions
 - teachers give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work when marking.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by making sure that:
 - all adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, particularly as pupils move around the school and during break times
 - all pupils learn to resolve disagreements without resorting to using inappropriate and hurtful language
 - lunchtime supervisors respond quickly to any concerns pupils may have and encourage pupils to cooperate and play together.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by making sure that:
 - all leaders have the skills required to carry out their roles effectively and are held to account for the difference they make to teaching and pupils' achievement
 - leaders effectively check the impact of teachers on the learning of different groups of pupils, and identify the precise actions individual teachers should take to help pupils make rapid progress
 - senior leaders provide governors with pertinent information about the achievement of different groups of pupils, so that governors can effectively hold all senior leaders to account for the progress of different groups of pupils
 - pupil premium funding is specifically targeted at meeting the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils
 - pupils in the Nursery are always taught by a qualified teacher.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the 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 first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 December 2015

Evidence

In addition to observing parts of lessons, inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior leadership team and staff, and three members of the interim executive board (IEB), including the Chair and Vice-Chair. Meetings were also held with one of the district leaders of the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP). The BEP has recently been commissioned by Birmingham City Council to support, challenge and secure school improvement across the city. Her Majesty's Inspector met senior representatives of two local primary schools, both of whom are national leaders in education (NLE). The NLEs are members of the Greet Teaching School Alliance and are providing support and training for leaders and staff at Springfield.

Inspectors spoke to parents and carers at the start of the school day. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally during lessons and breaktimes. Both inspectors selected a group of pupils from three different year groups to hear them read, talk to them about pupils' work, progress, safety and behaviour, and to ask them to share their views about the school.

The foci for this inspection are the capacity for the school to sustain improvements to teaching, and the effectiveness and impact of leaders and governors (IEB) to monitor, support and challenge teachers and support staff to improve their practice.

Context

The governing body was disbanded in July 2015 and replaced by the IEB. One of the two partner schools working with leaders and staff is part of the Greet Teaching School Alliance, and the other, Robin Hood Academy, provides direct support and intervention by seconding senior staff to lead the school on a part-time basis. The acting headteacher joined the school in September 2015. He has been seconded from Robin Hood Academy to manage the school while the substantive headteacher is on leave. The same partner school, with the agreement of the IEB, also seconds on a part-time basis a senior leader to support the school's substantive senior leadership team comprising the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers.

At the time of this inspection, records show that since September 2015 the school has regularly appointed supply teachers to cover classes as a result of frequent absenteeism among staff.

Outcomes for pupils

The most recent national assessments in 2015, which have yet to be validated, show that standards declined significantly at Key Stage 1 in reading and writing. At Key Stage 2 there was a mixed picture as assessment results showed a significant

decline in reading and an improvement in mathematics. These results reflect the significant weaknesses that remain in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Pupils' work, learning and progress over time in too many classes remain inadequate. As reported when the school was placed in special measures in May 2015, despite some pockets of good practice, teachers do not set consistently high enough expectations. Many pupils are capable of achieving higher standards and making faster progress but are not doing so because the teaching over time is not ambitious enough.

Gaps still exist between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others. Assessments show that disadvantaged pupils are approximately one half term or more behind other pupils nationally but, more importantly, the gap is not narrowing.

Evidence from lesson observations, assessment information and pupils' work in too many classes shows that pupils at the early stages of learning English make inadequate progress. In addition, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not always get the right level of expert support to enable them to catch up with other pupils or reach their individual learning targets. Discussions with pupils and observations of their work and progress in lessons show that too many pupils with additional learning needs are not doing well enough. They are either marking time with mundane tasks or falling behind because they try to complete work that is too difficult for them.

Too few of the most-able pupils make sufficient progress across the school because the work provided is not always extending their learning and, in writing for example, pupils make repeated spelling or punctuation errors.

Children in the early years classes still underachieve as reported in May 2015. Provision and teaching in the Nursery remain significant weaknesses. Nursery children are not learning enough or developing the necessary skills to prepare them for the next stage of their education. In the Reception classes, children do more stimulating and engaging activities and make better progress than Nursery children, although here too the children are capable of achieving a lot more, particularly in language and communication.

There is a small amount of consistently effective teaching, particularly in some Year 2 and Year 6 classes, enabling pupils in these classes to achieve much more than the large majority of pupils in other classes. There are also pockets of improving, though irregular, progress in some other classes, particularly in the mathematics work seen by inspectors and in the quality of handwriting in some pupils' work books. Nonetheless, the teaching is far from consistent enough to sustain improvements to pupils' progress over time in all classes and across the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Staffing instability and the frequent disruption to pupils' learning and progress caused by staff absence have hampered leaders' efforts to maintain consistency in the quality of teaching. There remain too many variations across classes in the pace and challenge being offered to pupils in lessons. These weaknesses were also reported at the time of the school's inspection in May 2015. Currently, learning observed in lessons, assessments of pupils' progress and the quality of work seen in books show that too many pupils underachieve over time and very little teaching is of good or better quality. This is not good enough.

Teachers plan and organise lessons very differently, despite regular scrutiny of their planning. For example, in the books seen by inspectors, and in too many lessons observed, the work set for pupils to complete does not always match their needs and capabilities. Teachers are not using assessment information about pupils' learning enough to plan tasks that build on what pupils already know and understand. In mathematics, for example, there are too many occasions where pupils carry out easy number calculations before moving on to harder work. Although teachers usually share each lesson's learning objectives with pupils, the work provided does not always extend or improve learning. Some learning objectives are either too easy or too hard for different groups and individuals. As stated earlier, this particularly affects the most-able pupils and those with additional learning needs.

Leaders and teachers are not checking with sufficient frequency pupils' work and performance to extract information about the progress of particular groups and individuals. Teachers do not usually adapt their plans or the activities prepared for pupils to extend learning further, and particularly for those who are capable of reaching or exceeding age-related levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching that requires most improvement is not challenging pupils and does not expect pupils to do enough work.

Many pupils, particularly those learning to speak English as an additional language, find it difficult to explain fully in complete sentences when answering teachers' questions. Too many teachers accept short phrases and incomplete sentences when pupils respond during class discussions. In many cases observed during the inspection, teachers and support staff answered for the pupils so they were not being encouraged to explain their ideas fully or offer suggestions clearly and accurately. In lessons, instructions are often given to the whole class, leaving less scope for teachers to check who understands and who does not. Teachers and support staff do not always use time efficiently to make sure that pupils stay on task or do enough work. Many workbooks show that, when pupils write at length for sustained periods, they are not always shown how to improve their sentences. As a result, some of the descriptions used by pupils in both narrative and descriptive writing do not make sense. Some of the mathematics books reviewed by inspectors included 'ticks' alongside inaccurate or incorrect answers. Adults do not intervene

enough during lessons to correct work while pupils are undertaking tasks, and in too many lessons, pupils stray off task or mark time when working independently so that their learning slows.

Some of the most effective teaching observed by inspectors encourages more productive and purposeful learning. For example, in a highly effective mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 6 applied their knowledge of improper fractions using formal methods of calculation, such as long division and multiplication, to solve complex combinations of number facts. The teacher skilfully intervened to support and challenge one group of pupils; he adapted his instructions with clear illustrations to make sure that all pupils understood and could move their learning on.

The school has started to address one of the areas for improvement in the early years by deploying a qualified teacher into the Nursery class. Nevertheless, the teaching in the early years, and particularly in the Nursery, remains inadequate. Nursery children often wander from one indoor or outdoor activity to another with no clear purpose or focus for their learning. There are too many missed opportunities to use the resources available to staff to support learning. Adults are usually supervising the children and are not intuitive or alert enough to respond to the children or to teach, monitor and assess their learning. For example, one Nursery child independently counted three balls and carried them from one container to another, yet no adult intervened to extend his skills using a counting display on the fence situated within easy reach of the child. Reception children make more progress, although, again, there are too many missed opportunities to build on what the children already know. Adults in both settings are not observing learning enough to assess children's progress or identify any gaps and misunderstandings, especially in the development of children's speech, language and communication skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning and school have improved since the inspection in May 2015. Nearly all the parents spoken to during the inspection agree. Pupils usually behave well in lessons and when playing outdoors during breaktimes. They move from one area or class to another sensibly, holding doors open for others and welcoming adults and visitors. They look smart and wear their school uniform with pride. Pupils are polite and courteous to other pupils, adults and visitors and relationships are positive throughout the school. Although pupils are attentive in lessons and listen to instructions, their behaviour is usually compliant rather than engaged in learning. For example, pupils will stop what they are doing and fold their arms when an adult asks them to, but they do not always listen to instructions, and mark time or stray off task if the work provided for them is undemanding.

Although adults ensure that pupils are safe and looked after, the quality and effectiveness of supervision at lunchtime are inconsistent. Adults do not always notice when pupils are climbing on outdoor picnic tables or playing too roughly, resulting in collisions and accidents. Some supervisors form warm and trusting

relationships with pupils, yet others are too disengaged, brusque or abrupt, and do not maintain eye contact with pupils when talking to them. Some pupils told inspectors that behaviour at lunchtime is not as good as it is at morning breaktime.

Records show that behaviour has improved compared with the time of the last inspection in May 2015. There are fewer incidents of bullying or inappropriate behaviour. Pupils confirm this, as many have told inspectors that they believe they are safe and that bullying is rare. Pupils also believe that they feel valued and respected by staff. Relationships between pupils, parents and staff are good.

Displays of pupils' work show that pupils are taught the British values of respect and tolerance, as well as rights and responsibilities. This is having a positive effect on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they learn about a range of customs, world religions and traditions. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 understand and appreciate that famous figures in the past argued and fought for civil rights, equality and democracy. There is evidence that pupils debate, discuss and share ideas, although there are too many occasions in lessons when pupils are unable to express themselves clearly and with confidence. This is because many do not use a broad enough vocabulary or have enough opportunities to organise their ideas and explain fully when responding to questions during class discussions. This limits their speech and language and affects the quality and accuracy of their writing.

Attendance remains below average, although persistent absence rates are lower than the national average. However, too many pupils across the school arrive late for school. Leaders and staff are doing all they can to work with families, but punctuality is poor because too many families are not doing enough to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

There is insufficient school improvement and the school is at risk of spiralling into further decline. The school's substantive senior leadership team, comprising the current headteacher who is on leave, the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers, have, for too long, accepted poor practice and not done enough to address significant weaknesses and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning. As reported in May 2015, these failings led to the school's inadequate overall effectiveness. The local authority, the school's leaders and governors have been too slow to respond to the recommendations set out in the full inspection in May 2015, so that the school remains fragile and at a high risk of further decline.

Since May 2015, the local authority and its officers have tried to support the school's leaders by forming partnerships with other schools and deploying well-qualified leaders with a strong track record to support school leaders and staff. The local authority removed the governing body in the summer and replaced it with an IEB. The difficulties and barriers that new leaders and governors face are many and significant. High levels of staff absence, a large and growing deficit budget, a school

website that is not functioning and does not fulfil statutory requirements and no coherent action plan to steer school improvement are but a few of the many shortcomings facing the IEB and the acting headteacher. The roles and responsibilities of staff with management responsibilities were non-existent when the acting headteacher joined in September 2015. These job descriptions have been written and agreed but the school's substantive senior leaders, and staff with management responsibilities, do not yet have the skills or experience to carry out their management roles effectively. Their track record does not show that they have to date had enough influence on weak practice.

The use of supply teachers to cover classes for permanent staff is unsustainable because the school cannot afford to continue paying these additional costs. Substantive senior leaders in the school are not based in classes as they are deployed to carry out monitoring roles. The substantial weaknesses and inconsistencies evident in each phase of the school show that senior and middle leaders are not using their time well enough to influence and improve teaching and learning in their respective areas of responsibility. In addition, some of the most effective teachers are not being used to share best practice or influence the work of other staff across classes and phases of the school. There is a lack of cohesion and collaborative working among staff which is reflected in the inconsistent practices that exist. The staff are working in isolation so that staff training and professional development lack continuity and are not having sufficient impact on their teaching.

The local authority and school action plans do not set out the correct and most urgent priorities for improvement. The timescales set out in the plans to target and monitor improvements to the quality of teaching are unrealistic and have not been achieved. In addition to weak monitoring, targets have not been achieved because the acting headteacher and IEB are having to deal with difficult staffing issues, the deficit budget and day-to-day disruptions to classes due to high levels of staff absenteeism.

Inspectors found that many teaching and support staff that do attend school regularly are willing to improve their practice and respond well to advice and guidance. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning and reviews of pupils' books undertaken by leaders at all levels are not robust or accurate enough to provide teachers with the right advice and guidance that will improve their teaching.

As a result of the removal of the governing body, the recommendations of the last inspection are not likely to be fulfilled with regard to implementing an external review of governance or a review of the school's use of pupil premium funding.

The school's single central record, staff vetting and safe recruitment policies and practices comply with statutory requirements.

External support

The local authority, through the BEP, has been slow to respond to the recommendations set out following Ofsted's evaluation of its statement of action. The statement is still not fit for purpose as it is not providing a clear enough steer for school leaders and the IEB to implement an effective action plan. The statement of action and the school's action plans will be inspected again when the school is next monitored by Her Majesty's Inspector.

The local authority's school improvement officers have not been vigilant enough to recognise the decline in the school's effectiveness, nor has the local authority intervened to prevent the school from accumulating a large budget deficit over a number of years.

Following the school being placed in special measures, the local authority has commissioned the BEP to support and challenge the school's leaders to improve. The involvement of the Greet Teaching School Alliance and a partner primary school has the potential to build further capacity for sustained improvement. Progress so far, however, has been hampered by significant personnel and staffing issues, and the lack of staffing stability.