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21 December 2015

Mrs Sarah Amin  
Acting Headteacher  
Manor Park Primary School  
Church Lane  
Aston  
Birmingham  
B6 5UQ

Dear Mrs Amin

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Manor Park Primary School**

Following my visit with Michael Appleby, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 2–3 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 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:

### **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 the 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 Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2014**

- Improve teaching, especially in Years 1 and 2, so that pupils make faster progress by making sure that teachers:
  - accurately identify and point out errors in pupils' work and insist that pupils correct them
  - give pupils more challenging tasks that teach them something new.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - taking steps to address the concerns of staff, restore their confidence in senior leaders and raise their morale
  - carrying out more accurate checks on the quality of teaching and addressing the weaknesses identified
  - drawing up and implementing a sharply focused plan to improve the school's performance
  - training governors to analyse data so they are more aware of how well the school is performing and better able to challenge senior leaders
  - improving the way that school finances, especially pupil premium funds, are managed.

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

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 2–3 December 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher and other senior leaders, the headteacher and some staff from Cromwell Junior and Infant School, a consultant headteacher, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), pupils and a representative from Birmingham Education Partnership. They also spoke informally with some parents. The majority of lessons observed during this monitoring inspection were seen jointly with the acting headteacher or the consultant headteacher. Inspectors reviewed examples of pupils' writing, mathematics and topic work with the acting headteacher. They took account of 12 Ofsted staff questionnaire responses together with the school's own staff questionnaire responses.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2015, there have been a number of changes in staffing. The permanent headteacher, who has been absent due to ill health since the first week of February 2015, resigned at the end of October 2015. Three permanent teachers left the school. The IEB appointed an interim deputy headteacher for one term and a permanent class teacher. They joined the school in September. They also appointed an assistant headteacher to take responsibility for the early years. She started working at the school in October 2015. The acting deputy headteacher returned to his substantive role as the assistant headteacher at the start of the autumn term. The IEB has appointed a number of temporary teachers during the term. At the time of this inspection visit, six classes were being taught by temporary teachers.

At the end of the summer term, the headteacher of Clifton Primary School, who is also a national leader of education, had been supporting Manor Park as an executive headteacher for two days a week. She relinquished this role and joined the school's IEB. At the same time, the support from teachers at Clifton came to an end.

A few staff in Key Stage 2 at Manor Park had been receiving support from staff at Cromwell since March 2015. The local authority arranged for the headteacher and staff from Cromwell to extend this existing level of support from September. The headteacher of Cromwell, who is also a local leader of education, had been on the IEB. In September, she stepped down from the IEB in order to take on this support role. The headteacher from Cromwell also arranged for a consultant headteacher and another independent consultant to work to support teachers with improving reading at Manor Park. The external support will continue until April 2016.

Manor Park will convert to academy status in January 2016. REAch2 will become the sponsors for the school.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Last academic year, pupils did not achieve well because of persistent weaknesses in teaching. By the end of Reception, only 39% of children reached a good level of development, in comparison to 61% of children nationally. In the 2015 national tests, standards remained significantly below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards at Manor Park were in the lowest 10% of schools. From their different starting points in Year 2, the pupils in Year 6 made inadequate progress in reading and mathematics. While the majority of pupils made expected progress in writing, pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs made inadequate progress in writing. The school's latest achievement information and work in pupils' books shows a more positive picture. Standards are rising steadily. Pupils' work shows that since September pupils in all year groups are making faster progress than in the past. This is because of improvements in teaching.

The actions taken to raise pupils' achievement in reading have been particularly effective. Dedicated sessions that focus on reading skills and the sounds that letters make (phonics) are having a beneficial impact. Pupils are learning to read and understand unfamiliar words, read a variety of texts, and carry out research during these sessions. As a consequence, pupils are becoming confident and fluent readers. When writing, pupils are getting better at ensuring they spell correctly and use punctuation and grammar with increasing accuracy. This is because teachers are emphasising the importance of these aspects when pupils write, and pointing out errors in pupils' work. Opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills across subjects are increasing gradually. In mathematics, pupils are much more secure with using addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to answer questions. Nevertheless, and as reported previously, pupils do not have enough chances to solve complex problems. This prevents them from extending their mathematical skills and understanding.

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

At the time of the last monitoring inspection, pupils were not making enough progress in the majority of classes because of inadequate teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants have responded well to the advice and support from the acting headteacher, the headteacher and staff from Cromwell, the consultant headteacher and the reading consultant. Consequently, teaching and rates of progress for different groups of pupils have markedly improved. School leaders recognise that although teaching is stronger than in the past, there is not enough consistently good and better teaching to ensure that standards rise more quickly.

Where pupils make the strongest gains in learning, teachers use the information they have about pupils' achievement to plan work that provides a suitable level of challenge for pupils of different abilities. Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with timely support during the lesson so that pupils gain new skills and knowledge quickly. Questions are used skilfully to check pupils' understanding and to extend pupils' thinking. Teachers also ensure that pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are provided with the resources they need to help them complete their work.

There are a number of reasons why pupils do not consistently make rapid gains in their learning. Pupils of different abilities told inspectors that their work is sometimes too easy, especially in mathematics. Work in pupils' books and visits to lessons confirm this to be the case. Occasionally, the progress pupils make slows because they are not given sufficient time to complete the task set by the teacher.

Teaching in the early years has improved significantly. The classrooms and outdoor learning areas are better organised and enable children to access equipment easily. Staff have high expectations of children and ensure that the different activities help children to make the progress they should in Nursery and increasing proportions to make accelerated progress in Reception. In the Nursery class, staff sometimes miss the opportunity to develop pupils' speaking and writing skills.

Staff in all year groups adhere to the school's marking policy. They provide pupils with relevant guidance and give pupils the chance to correct errors. The pupils who spoke with inspectors stated that the 'blue for brilliant' and the 'green for growth' are helpful and tell them what they need to do to improve.

Pupils across the school are taking greater pride in the presentation of their work. They do their best to write neatly and form their numbers and letters correctly. Nevertheless, some pupils struggle to write legibly. Not all pupils hold their pencil correctly. Some find it difficult to write neatly on plain paper because the teachers do not provide them with line guides.

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

Pupils' behaviour continues to improve, but remains variable. Pupils are polite and courteous and keen to talk about their work. Pupils told inspectors that most pupils behave well and that they feel safe. Older pupils told inspectors that behaviour in the morning is better than in the afternoon lessons. Inspectors agree. In the mornings, pupils listen carefully and work together well. In the afternoons, some pupils become easily distracted and occasionally lose their focus. This mainly happens when the activities that teachers plan fail to inspire pupils or capture pupils' interests. One pupil commented, and others agreed, that 'Morning lessons are more fun.'

Pupils respond well to praise and like the certificates and rewards that acknowledge good behaviour in lessons and around school. Pupils walk around school quietly. In the playground they cooperate when playing games and share the playground equipment with people of different ages. Parents who spoke with inspectors were positive about the improvements in behaviour and confirmed that their children are kept safe. A few parents raised concerns about the supervision of pupils at the end of the school day. Inspectors found, and pupils confirmed, that teachers and teaching assistants make sure that pupils are well supervised until they are collected by their parents.

Staff continue to keep a close check on pupils' attendance and use a wide range of rewards to encourage pupils to attend regularly. As a result, attendance remains similar to the national average for primary schools.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The leadership of the school has been considerably strengthened. The headteacher of Cromwell and the consultant headteacher provide the acting headteacher with highly effective support. Together they have successfully tackled the significant weaknesses in teaching that were evident at the time of the last monitoring inspection. The acting headteacher, with the other senior leaders, has arranged for staff to receive appropriate training and support. She has also taken appropriate action in response to weak teaching.

The three senior leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. Their individual feedback to staff following visits to lessons and reviews of pupils' work is accurate and correctly focused on helping pupils make good progress and improving teaching. Additionally, the acting headteacher meets regularly with teachers to discuss pupils' achievement. These meetings help teachers to identify the specific actions needed to raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

The acting headteacher is currently refining the systems for checking the work of staff. She wants to ensure that individual teachers and teaching assistants take greater responsibility for prioritising and reviewing progress towards their personal areas for development.

Staff morale has improved and is now good. Staff welcome support and training and they are keen to improve their practice. Almost all staff who responded to the Ofsted and school questionnaires were positive about the changes that have taken place. Teachers who spoke to inspectors stated that they appreciate the advice they receive from senior leaders.

The newly appointed assistant headteacher with responsibility for early years is successfully building on the work that was started in September by staff from Cromwell. She is continuing to improve provision for the youngest children in the school. She has very quickly identified where further improvements are required. For instance, the early years leader is aware that children's achievements in the Nursery are not adequately captured in the 'learning journals'.

Following frequent changes in class teachers, the interim deputy headteacher was asked to teach in Year 6. Alongside staff from Cromwell, she has contributed to better achievement for pupils in this year group. The assistant headteacher with responsibility for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs has helped to ensure that these pupils receive the support they need and make better progress than in the past, with substantial support from the deputy headteacher from Cromwell.

The acting headteacher recognises that staff at Manor Park remain heavily reliant on support from the headteacher and staff from Cromwell and the consultant headteacher. This is because there are not enough teachers within the school who have the skills required to build on the recent improvements. The three senior leaders have started to plan training opportunities in order to further develop the skills of teachers with responsibility for subjects or aspects of Manor Park's work. The acting headteacher is also in the process of establishing 'staff teams' so that staff can work together to drive forward improvements.

The revised school improvement plan correctly identifies where improvements are required and clear criteria against which success can be measured. However, it does not state who will evaluate the impact of the actions within the plan on pupils' achievement, teaching and leadership.

Pupils continue to be taught a broad range of subjects. The quality of work in pupils' books has improved. Teachers are increasingly placing a greater emphasis on ensuring that the activities they plan help pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding. Year 3 pupils, for instance, spoke enthusiastically and ably about life in the Stone Age. Opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills across different subjects are increasing steadily.

The members of the IEB continue to maintain a strong focus on teaching and learning. Senior leaders ensure that they receive regular updates on pupils' achievement. As a result, members are able to ask pertinent questions about different groups of pupils. The chair of the IEB has worked well with senior leaders and the local authority to help resolve a number of staffing issues. He also continues to keep a close check on the school's finances and the allocation of pupil premium expenditure. Senior leaders and members of the IEB intend to review the impact of this additional funding on pupils' achievement at the end of the autumn term.

The chair of the IEB and the acting headteacher continue to hold regular discussions with REAch2 in preparation for academy conversion. The acting headteacher has attended a number of training courses organised by REAch2. Appropriate plans are in place for setting up a transition governing body.

### **External support**

Following the last monitoring inspection, the local authority responded quickly to strengthen the leadership of the school. A number of staff from Cromwell, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the teachers with responsibility for early years and Key Stage 1 have been working alongside leaders, teachers and teaching assistants at Manor Park. Local authority advisers have also helped the chair of the IEB and senior leaders to resolve a significant number of staffing issues. In addition to this, the headteacher of Cromwell has taken a strong lead in organising further support for staff at Manor Park. She arranged for a consultant headteacher to provide targeted support and advice for individual leaders and staff at Manor Park. In addition, she arranged for an independent consultant to work closely with the acting headteacher and provide staff with specific support with the teaching of reading. All this combined support has had a beneficial impact on teaching and pupils' achievement.

A Birmingham Education Partnership representative visited the school in October 2015. He spoke with senior leaders, some staff and visited some classes in order to review the school's work. At the time of this monitoring inspection, senior leaders had not received a written report from this visit.