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Catherine Rindl
Interim Headteacher
Nansen Primary School
Naseby Road
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Dear Mrs Rindl

Following my visit with Michael Onyon, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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.

I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Chief Executive Officer of the trust, the Chair of the Local Governing Body, the Academies Advisers Unit 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 April 2014

- Make sure that all leaders and managers keep pupils safe and prepare them for life in modern Britain by:
 - ensuring that pupils understand how to deal with all types of bullying
 - working with other agencies to make sure that pupils recognise the dangers and risks associated with extremism and radicalisation
 - implementing a programme of religious education that helps pupils understand the main beliefs of all major religions
 - making sure there is a suitably qualified person to administer paediatric first aid.

- Make sure that the governing body fulfils its legal responsibilities by:
 - having fair and transparent recruitment processes
 - ensuring equal opportunities for staff and pupils
 - making sure the academy provides a broad range of subjects for all pupils
 - providing effectively for pupils' cultural development
 - improving the management and checking procedures of the academy's finances.

- Ensure teachers improve their teaching and raise pupils' attainment, particularly for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, by:
 - making sure that leaders check on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make
 - checking that teachers' marking helps pupils improve their work
 - insisting that teachers take account of what pupils already know and understand when planning activities, especially for the more-able pupils and those who are disabled or have special educational needs
 - making sure that teachers always spell words correctly
 - making sure that pupils spell correctly, use grammar and punctuation appropriately and write legibly
 - using information about pupils' achievement to check carefully how well different groups of pupils are learning
 - using assessment information to identify pupils' needs more quickly
 - appointing a full-time and qualified special educational needs coordinator.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 December 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, two deputy headteachers, four assistant headteachers and four teachers with responsibilities for subjects. They also met with the Chief Executive Officer and other representatives of the Academy Trust Board, the Chair of the Local Governing Body and three other governors, and the Academy Trust Board's school improvement partner. Inspectors met with a group of pupils and spoke informally with pupils and parents. Inspectors made brief visits to lessons in all year groups and reviewed examples of pupils' writing, mathematics and topic work with school leaders. They took account of the 57 Ofsted staff questionnaire responses.

Context

The headteacher of Benson Community School continues to assume the role of interim headteacher. Following the resignation of the special educational needs coordinator, an interim deputy headteacher was appointed to oversee the provision for disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs. She joined the school in September 2015. At the same time a permanent assistant headteacher was also appointed. Since the previous monitoring inspection, the Local Governing Body has appointed four newly qualified teachers and four teachers to provide targeted support for groups of pupils. They all joined the school in September and are on a one-year contract. The school continues to ensure that there are qualified staff to administer paediatric first aid and that recruitment processes are fair and transparent.

At the end of the summer term, The CORE Education Trust appointed the previous executive principal of Nansen Primary and Rockwood Academy as the Chief Executive Officer. Members and directors roles were also reviewed to ensure that there were no conflicts of interest. This resulted in a change of directors, and to the appointment of a new Chair of the Board of the Directors and a school improvement partner. They both joined the trust in September 2015.

Staff at Nansen Primary School have continued to receive support from staff at Benson Community School, the Greet Teaching School Alliance and Lillian De Lissa Nursery School.

Outcomes for pupils

The overall proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception was above the national figure in 2015. However, boys did not achieve as well as girls in the school. This was particularly the case in reading and writing. The difference between boys' and girls' achievement was also evident in the Year 1

phonics check (letters and the sounds that they make). A lower proportion of boys than girls achieved the expected standard in this check.

In 2015, standards were broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. There were no significant differences between the standards attained by boys and girls. The 2015 Year 6 national test results were disappointing. They reflected the impact of previous weaknesses in teaching. Standards were significantly below in reading, writing, mathematics and English, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils, and particularly the lower-ability pupils, did not make enough progress from their different starting points in Year 2.

Work in pupils' books and visits to lessons confirm that pupils' achievement is improving quickly in the majority of classes, with increasing proportions of pupils making good progress. School leaders and staff are responding appropriately to the differences in boys' and girls' achievement in Reception and Year 1 and the poor outcomes at the end of Year 6. In some classes, pupils' achievement since September has been affected by disruptions in staffing and a few remaining weaknesses in teaching. Senior leaders are taking suitable action to strengthen teaching and to ensure that pupils in these classes catch up with their learning speedily.

When writing, pupils are spelling with increased accuracy and using punctuation and grammar more precisely. Opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their writing skills across different subjects have increased significantly. Boys and girls enjoy writing because the themes that teachers select are interesting. Pupils in Year 2, for instance, were thoroughly enjoying writing a letter based on the film *The Snowman*.

The teaching of reading has improved markedly. Activities during reading lessons are much more purposeful and they are providing pupils with the opportunity to discuss different texts, retrieve information, explore the meanings of words and use phonics to read unfamiliar words. As a result, pupils are becoming confident readers who enjoy reading both at home and school. Occasionally, adults do not make sure that pupils who struggle with their reading pronounce words or letter sounds correctly.

Pupils' knowledge of number skills, and other aspects of mathematics, is continuing to develop well. They can, for instance, recognise the values of different digits and solve basic problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division with confidence. Opportunities for pupils to deepen their mathematical understanding have improved significantly in Year 6. By working alongside staff, and by teaching the most-able Year 6 pupils, a mathematics teacher from Rockwood Academy is having a particularly beneficial impact on the achievement of these pupils. Consequently, they are becoming proficient at solving complex problems, carrying out investigations and exploring patterns in mathematics. In other year groups, the mathematical problems pupils are asked to solve are sometimes too simplistic. They do not provide enough challenge, especially for the most-able pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching has continued to improve and is much stronger than at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from suitable support and guidance from senior leaders and staff from other schools.

There are a number of reasons why pupils in the majority of classes are making more rapid gains in learning. Teachers are increasingly making better use of the information they have about what pupils already know and can do to plan interesting and suitable activities for pupils of different abilities, particularly in reading and writing. They are, for instance, making sure that pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs receive precise explanations before working on their own. They are also making sure that they have access to the equipment and prompts they need. Teachers and teaching assistants are also using questions well to check pupils' understanding and to provide further support to individuals and groups. Pupils told inspectors that, 'teachers answer our questions' and they 'give us step-by-step instructions so we know what we need to do'. Additionally, teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors are working together well to provide timely support for pupils.

There are instances when pupils do not make rapid progress. This is especially the case for the most-able pupils in Years 1 to 5 in mathematics. This is because they are not always provided with work that challenges them sufficiently. Sometimes teachers do not give the pupils who are ready to work on their own enough time to complete their work. Occasionally, the pupils who are finding their work easy as the lesson progresses are not moved on to more challenging work quickly enough.

Teaching continues to improve in the Reception classes. The activities that teachers plan make a good contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. During the inspection, the children were enthusiastically rehearsing their nativity performance. They spoke with confidence, sang in tune and listened carefully as different pupils performed. In the Nursery class, the activities that staff plan remain variable in quality. Staff are still not making sure that children are clear about their learning when they work on their own. Also, the activities do not always inspire the children. Consequently the children lose interest very quickly. The records of children's achievement are providing a more accurate record of what pupils can do and what they know in Reception. This is not the case in Nursery.

Teachers' marking continues to improve. In accordance with school policy, teachers make sure that they model correct spellings and identify errors so that pupils can improve their work. Where there are inconsistencies in marking, these are in the classes where there have been changes in staff. Pupils are increasingly taking greater pride in the presentation of their work. They are keen to show adults their work and are proud that they can now form and join their letters neatly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are polite and welcoming. They wear the new school uniform colours with pride and they are keen to talk about the improvements in their school. Since the previous monitoring inspection, pupils, staff and senior leaders have reviewed the school's approach to promoting appropriate behaviour. Together, they have devised a 'Nansen School Charter'. This charter contains a 'pupil promise' and a 'teacher promise'. These promises make expectations of pupils' behaviour clear and also explain how staff will ensure that pupils are treated with dignity and respect.

Parents and staff who spoke to inspectors stated that pupils' behaviour had improved. The majority of staff that responded to the Ofsted questionnaire were also positive about pupils' behaviour. A small minority raised concerns, particularly about behaviour during lunchtime. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour has improved markedly, both in classrooms and around school. Records confirm that there has been a significant reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour. They also show that the deputy headteacher continues to ensure that all reported incidents are followed up promptly and that appropriate action is taken.

In lessons, pupils are attentive. They are keen to respond to teachers' questions and share their ideas. In some classes, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. In one Year 6 class, pupils worked together diligently in order to solve problems involving the height, width and volume of a range of shapes. They listened carefully to each other's hypotheses before testing them out and explaining how they arrived at their answers. In some other year groups, pupils very occasionally become restless. This tends to happen when they do not find the activities sufficiently engaging.

Pupils walk around the school calmly. When they move from one class to another, they talk to each other using quiet voices so that they do not disturb the pupils who are still working. Breaktimes have been reorganised so that pupils in different year groups are not outside at the same time. This has helped to reduce congestion in the playground. Also, a newly installed ball court has provided pupils with a dedicated and safe place to play ball games. A few pupils, especially older boys, are a little boisterous at times. They do not always show an awareness of their surroundings as they run around. This leads to pupils sometimes bumping into each other and falling over. To further improve behaviour in the playground, school leaders are in the process of extending the range of clubs and play activities available for pupils.

Staff continue to ensure that pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of different types of bullying. Pupils that spoke with inspectors confirmed that they feel safe and they know how to raise any concerns they may have. The deputy headteacher continues to ensure that staff are fully aware of the risks associated with extremism and radicalisation.

Staff keep a close check on pupils' attendance and use a wide range of rewards to encourage pupils to attend regularly. At the time of this inspection, pupils' attendance was broadly similar to the national average for primary schools. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced significantly since September.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership of the school continues to improve. The interim headteacher is a strong and influential leader. She is highly focused on raising pupils' achievement and strengthening teaching. In partnership with the Chief Executive Officer of the trust she is ensuring that staff receive the personalised support they need. The interim headteacher is also rightly challenging weak teaching and taking swift and appropriate action to ensure that teaching improves. The deputy headteachers and the assistant headteachers are providing the interim headteacher with valuable support. The majority of staff that responded to the staff questionnaire are of the view that the school is well led.

The systems for monitoring the work of staff have improved significantly. Senior leaders work together well to check the work of all staff regularly. They provide teachers and teaching assistants with helpful support and guidance. Frequent meetings between senior leaders and class teachers focus on the achievement of different groups of pupils and the actions that need to be taken to help all pupils make at least good progress. These meetings, combined with the checks on teachers' work, have contributed to the improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement in the majority of classes. Senior leaders are fully aware that further work is required to ensure that teaching is consistently good and better. They have identified suitable actions to eradicate the remaining weaknesses in teaching.

The newly appointed interim deputy headteacher has significantly enhanced the provision for disabled pupils or pupils who have special educational needs. She is making sure that pupils receive all the support they need. Additionally, through weekly 'surgeries' for staff, she is giving individual teachers the chance to discuss the achievement of these pupils and the best ways to meet their learning needs.

The teachers with responsibilities for subjects are in the early stages of leading improvements in their areas. The interim headteacher has appropriate support and training planned for these teachers.

Pupils are continuing to be taught a broad range of subjects. Subjects have been reorganised into 'topics' that interest both boys and girls, and give pupils the chance to learn through first-hand experiences. Pupils in Year 5, for instance, spoke enthusiastically about their 'gravity' topic. They explained that they designed a rocket ship, learned about the phases of the moon, satellites and forces. They also carried out an investigation in order to find the best rocket fuel. Senior leaders

acknowledge that the quality of work in pupils' topic books, especially in Years 3 and 4, is not as high as it is in English and mathematics.

Through religious education lessons and school assemblies pupils are continuing to learn about and understand the main beliefs of all major religions. Pupils have a good awareness of right and wrong and the democratic process. They are currently applying for roles and responsibilities within school. Pupils told inspectors that this application process was a good way of ensuring that everyone had an equal chance to be selected.

The governance of the school has strengthened further. Through regular visits and meetings with senior leaders, members have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They are now holding all senior leaders rigorously to account for the achievement of different groups of pupils. They have reviewed the use of pupil premium funding, the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after, and are regularly checking the impact of this money on pupils' achievement.

External support

Members and directors of the CORE Education Trust have played a crucial role in securing the improvements in the academy since the previous monitoring inspection. They have a clear vision for the future of the school and an accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and developments. They are using this information well to arrange additional support for staff, reduce the support where it is no longer required and, if necessary, to change the focus of any prearranged support. The systems for evaluating the work of the school are robust. The Chief Executive Officer of the trust maintains a relentless focus on pupils' achievement, teaching and leadership. He works exceptionally well with the interim headteacher and other senior leaders to drive forward the changes required. Through weekly meetings, discussions with senior leaders and ongoing discussions with pupils and staff, he keeps a close check on the work of the school. In partnership with the interim headteacher he identifies clear and precise actions in order to continue raising pupils' achievement. The trust's school improvement partner has helped the assistant headteachers to gain the skills required to take greater responsibility for leading developments in the school. The staff from Benson Community School, the Greet Teaching School Alliance and Lillian De Lissa Nursery School have contributed to the improvements in pupils' achievement and teaching.