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7 January 2016

Nicola Fisher
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Dear Miss Fisher

Special measures monitoring inspection of Moor Green Primary Academy

Following my visit with Jonathan Keay, Ofsted Inspector, to your academy on 15 and 16 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 up to two newly qualified teachers if guidance and support are provided by a consistently effective teacher.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, 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 September 2014

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all teachers:
 - check learning carefully, clear up any misconceptions and move pupils on quickly to the next task
 - ask questions skilfully to improve the range and quality of pupils' spoken responses in lessons
 - make sure that pupils behave well in all lessons
 - provide the most-able pupils with work that makes them think hard and learn as quickly as they can.

- Raise pupils' achievement and enjoyment, especially in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - pupils develop their multiplication skills securely
 - pupils present and write out their calculations neatly and accurately
 - weaknesses in pupils' use of punctuation and spelling are tackled effectively
 - pupils are given good opportunities to write on a range of topics and for different purposes
 - effective support is provided for boys, pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs
 - disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress so that they catch up with other groups
 - attendance improves to at least the national average.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - procedures for collecting, organising and sharing data about pupils' performance are effective, and assessment information is used well to improve pupils' achievement
 - all staff apply the school's behaviour policy effectively
 - rigorous systems for managing staff performance are established and used effectively to identify training needs, and to improve teaching, leadership skills and the quality of self-evaluation
 - governors rapidly improve their capacity to hold leaders firmly to account
 - partnership work between the trust and the academy is effective.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 December 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, teachers with responsibilities for subjects or aspects of the academy's work, and pupils. They also met with a representative from REAch2, who is also the Chair of the Transition Board. Additionally, inspectors had a telephone conversation with the previous Chair of the Governing Body and they met with another governor who was on the previous governing body. They spoke informally with some parents and pupils during the inspection. The majority of lessons observed during this monitoring inspection were seen jointly with the headteacher or the assistant headteacher. Inspectors reviewed samples of pupils' writing, mathematics and topic work with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.

Context

On 1 September 2015, REAch2 replaced the previous academy sponsors. It appointed a new headteacher, who joined the academy at the start of the autumn term. REAch2 also set up a transition governing body with three members from the academy's previous governing body and two representatives from the academy trust. REAch2 associate school leaders have been providing support for some teachers at Moor Green.

There have been a number of changes in staffing since the previous monitoring inspection. Two permanent teachers and two temporary teachers have left the academy. They were replaced with four permanent teachers. The teacher with responsibility for leading improvements in English relinquished this role. The assistant headteacher took responsibility for English at the end of September. At the time of this monitoring inspection, the deputy headteacher was absent due to ill-health.

Outcomes for pupils

In the last academic year, the achievement of different groups of pupils was hampered by weaknesses in teaching. In 2015 the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception was similar to the national figure. Nonetheless, boys did not achieve as well as girls in reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, a lower proportion of boys than girls met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check (the sounds that letters make).

The standards attained by pupils at the end of Year 2 in 2015 were similar to the national average in reading and writing, but significantly below average in mathematics. While there were no marked differences between boys and girls, disadvantaged pupils attained less well than their peers in reading and writing. The pupils in Year 6 made the progress they should. However, this was not enough to help them reach the standards expected for their age. Standards were below the national average in mathematics, writing and English, and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. They were significantly below average in reading. Boys and disadvantaged pupils attained less well than their peers.

Pupils currently in the academy are making better progress than in the past, particularly in mathematics and writing. The majority of teachers are making sure that pupils know how to develop their addition, subtraction and multiplication skills securely. They are also helping pupils to record calculations neatly and accurately when solving mathematical problems. Opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes and about a range of topics are developing well. Pupils in Year 6, for instance, were excited to be writing their own stories based on characters from the Harry Potter books. However, pupils across the academy do not always use punctuation properly or spell with accuracy in different subjects. Pupils' reading skills remain weak. Academy leaders have appropriate plans in place to help pupils become fluent readers.

Teachers are now planning activities that interest all pupils. This is helping to close the gap between the attainment of boys and girls as boys show an increased willingness to learn. The progress made by the most-able pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs varies from class to class because of continuing inconsistencies in teaching. Academy leaders have organised additional teaching support for disadvantaged pupils. The impact of this support on their learning has not been checked.

In the Reception classes, children's achievement remains uneven. As reported at the time of the last monitoring inspection, the activities that the children complete on their own are too easy. However, a few improvements are evident, and teachers are now making sure that pupils learn about different aspects of mathematics. These include number, shape and time.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is continuing to improve. The majority of teachers are responding positively to support and training from senior leaders, the teacher with responsibility for mathematics and the REAch2 associate school leaders. Senior leaders acknowledge that further work is required to ensure that teaching is consistently good in all year groups and across different subjects.

Where pupils make the strongest gains in learning, teachers make sure that they plan activities that provide pupils of different abilities with appropriate work. They ask questions that encourage pupils to use the correct subject terminology and give extended responses. Teachers also clearly explain what pupils are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. Additionally, they check how well pupils are learning during the lesson and move the pupils who are ready on to work that will deepen their understanding. In one example, a teacher in Year 5 asked pupils to calculate the perimeter of an irregular shape. He asked the pupils precise questions so that he could check their understanding, and then set the pupils that were ready suitably challenging work. The pupils in this class responded enthusiastically and used their prior knowledge and understanding to solve complex mathematical problems successfully.

There are instances when children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 do not make the progress they should. The activities for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are sometimes too difficult. They are, for example, given information that they cannot read without the support of an adult. In contrast, the activities for the most able are sometimes too easy and do not build on what pupils already know. This mismatch of activities hinders the progress of these groups of pupils.

Teachers are increasingly providing pupils with written feedback that is in line with the academy's guidance. As a result, pupils in the majority of classes have a clearer view of their achievements and also what could be better. The presentation of pupils' work has improved markedly. Pupils are now pleased to share their work with each other and adults.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved. They are keen to learn and to talk about their work. The behaviour of pupils in Year 6 is exceptional. They work cooperatively and with determination when set a challenge. In other year groups, most pupils persevere and stay focused. Some pupils become restless when their activities are too easy or too difficult.

The member of staff who supports individual pupils with their behaviour (the learning mentor) is successfully helping pupils to behave appropriately in lessons and around the academy. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were very complimentary about his role in the academy. They also confirmed that they feel safe because adults listen to them and staff teach them how to keep safe in different situations, such as when using social media sites.

Pupils walk around the academy calmly, even when they are not supervised by an adult. Behaviour in the playground is better than at the time of the previous monitoring inspection because pupils are no longer bored during their breaks. The learning mentor and sport coaches organise a good range of activities for pupils in the playground. Pupils also have the opportunity to take part in indoor activities if they do not want to play outside.

Pupils' attendance remains below the national average for primary schools. The headteacher is intending to introduce a range of rewards and to work more closely with external agencies in order to encourage pupils to attend more regularly.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The newly appointed headteacher has very quickly gained a thorough understanding of the academy's strengths and areas for development. She is helping teachers to improve their practice by arranging appropriate support for individual teachers and teaching assistants. The headteacher is tackling weaknesses in teaching and leadership with tenacity.

The headteacher is well supported by the assistant headteacher. Together they check the work of staff, and identify the aspects of teaching that should be improved.

With effective support from REAch2, senior leaders have reorganised information about pupils' achievement so that they can keep a closer check on the standards attained by different groups of pupils. However, when they meet with teachers to discuss this information, they do not identify the precise actions that teachers will take to raise pupils' achievement.

The teacher with responsibility for mathematics is an effective leader and role model for staff. Through training and support she is helping teachers to better meet the needs of pupils in mathematics. The headteacher is planning further training for the other teachers with responsibilities so that they can also lead improvements in the academy.

During the absence of the deputy headteacher, the headteacher is overseeing the academy's provision for pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs. The headteacher has started to review this aspect of the academy's work and determine the actions that will be taken. She is already aware that teachers and teaching assistants do not always enable these pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

The academy improvement plan accurately identifies the actions that need to be taken to raise pupils' achievement and further strengthen teaching. The plan does not make clear who will check the effectiveness of the actions or how often these checks will take place.

Pupils are taught a broad range of subjects. Pupils in Year 2, for instance, spoke excitedly about Florence Nightingale and the difference between hospitals in the past and the present. The quality of work in pupils' topic books is variable. When writing in their topic books, they do not always pay the same attention to their spelling, punctuation or grammar as they do in their English books.

The majority of parents who spoke with inspectors were optimistic about the changes that have taken place. They said that pupils' behaviour was better and that their children were learning more than before. A few parents raised a number of concerns, including the lack of communication from REAch2. The REAch2 representative who met with inspectors acknowledged the need to improve communication between the trust and parents.

Senior leaders work well with staff to ensure that pupils are safe and that staff know what they need to do if they have any concerns about pupils' welfare. However, the academy's systems for recording information in relation to keeping pupils safe are cumbersome and it is not always easy to check for instance how often staff in the early years examine the outdoor learning areas. In the light of these inspection findings, the headteacher is going to arrange for a review of the academy's procedures.

Since the establishment of a transition governing body in September, REAch2 has not been able to arrange for members to meet formally. As a consequence, there have been no regular meetings with senior leaders to discuss or evaluate the work of the academy, or to check the impact of the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after children. Despite the lack of formal meetings, two of the previous governors who are now on the transition governing body have visited the academy. They have met with senior leaders, visited classes and asked insightful questions about the impact of the actions taken since September on teaching and pupils' learning. A formal transition governing body meeting has been planned for January 2016.

External support

The REAch2 associate school leaders and REAch2 training events have contributed to the improvements in teaching and pupils' achievements in mathematics and writing. In contrast, REAch2 has been unable to sustain the improvements in governance that were evident at the time of the previous monitoring inspection.

The previous sponsor's statement of action was judged not to be fit for purpose. REAch2 is in the process of producing a new statement of action. This will be made available to Her Majesty's Inspector by the end of January 2016.