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Mr Gianni Bianchi  
Gray's Farm Primary Academy  
Gray's Farm Road  
Orpington  
Bromley  
BR5 3AD

Dear Mr Bianchi

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Gray's Farm Primary Academy**

Following my visit to your academy with Nicholas Hunt and Danvir Visvanathan, Ofsted Inspectors, on 20 and 21 January 2016, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

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

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

#### **The academy is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The proprietor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I recommend that the academy can appoint up to two newly qualified teachers. I strongly recommend that leaders discuss the available capacity in the academy to support such an appointment with Her Majesty's Inspector.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for the London borough of Bromley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

David Storrie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, senior and middle leaders, a representative of the academy trust, pupils, parents and teachers. Inspectors visited a number of lessons with leaders. The proprietor's statement of action and the academy's improvement action plans were evaluated. Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents provided by the academy. These included policies for safeguarding, the single central record (showing the checks made on the suitability of staff to work with pupils), the review of governance and review of the pupil premium. The recent review of pupils' behaviour was also discussed with leaders as this had only taken place the day before this monitoring inspection. The focus of the monitoring visit was on the areas identified for improvement in the most recent section 5 inspection, relating to the effectiveness of leadership and management.

## **Context**

A new executive headteacher was appointed full time to the academy in September 2015. The previous headteacher at this time became the substantive head of school. One teacher left the academy in August 2015 following the section 5 inspection. Two new teachers and a nursery manager took up their posts in September 2015.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the academy**

The new executive headteacher has established a clear vision where all pupils are expected to achieve regardless of their ethnicity, background or prior ability. This has begun to establish a culture of higher expectations throughout the academy. Staff are united in their desire to improve the progress and attainment of pupils so that all benefit from a good standard of education. The executive headteacher, leaders and the academy trust rightly acknowledge there is a legacy of poor outcomes for pupils that the academy must overcome. This journey has begun in earnest. The 2015 pupil outcomes for Key Stages 1 and 2 showed improvement on previous years and the academy met the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6. The academy's own information shows that the progress being made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is accelerating. However, this is not yet consistent in all year groups and many pupils have much to catch up on to achieve as well as they should for their age.

Pupils are beginning to rise to the increased expectations from staff. They are increasingly using oral and written feedback to improve their writing and mathematics. However, pupils' handwriting is not always doing their work justice or helping them to achieve as well as they could. Staff are not consistently modelling the academy's handwriting policy or ensuring that pupils in Key Stage 2 use joined-

up handwriting. Leaders accept that this is an area of the academy's work that needs to improve further. Pupils now regularly complete their homework and understand the value of practising further their academic learning. However, the work completed is not always well presented or representative of the quality they are capable of. Nonetheless, homework has moved forward since the inspection in June 2015. Leaders agree that further work is necessary to decide how homework complements the academy's developing curriculum and that it needs to be given even greater value by pupils, parents and staff.

Leaders rightly identified the academy's nursery as an early priority following the section 5 inspection report. The new nursery manager has set out a clear programme of improvements with senior leaders. Children now benefit from learning activities which are planned to meet their interests and learning needs. The classroom is well laid out with a range of engaging activities. Staff have worked hard to establish positive relationships with parents and involve them in the children's learning. A clear system has been established to record children's learning and development and help staff identify what children need to progress further in their learning. It is too soon to fully see the impact of all the changes that have been put into place. However, inspectors sampled a range of evidence about children's learning. This work showed that staff are accurately capturing children's learning and progress over time.

Leaders have established their own development programme for teachers and teaching assistants. This is being tailored to individual needs identified from checks on lessons, pupils' books and pupil progress information. The role of middle leaders is being developed. They are beginning to take greater responsibility for making checks in the areas they lead on. These leaders help to identify where improvements in teaching are required and re-check to see whether improvements have been made. Senior leaders acknowledge that middle leaders are now ready to take further responsibility by systematically reviewing all available information, such as pupil assessment information, classroom displays, pupil feedback and pupils' books as part of their monitoring roles within the academy. The development programme and the monitoring undertaken so far are driving improvements in teaching across the academy, as well as helping to improve pupils' behaviour in and around the academy.

There is a developing culture of collective responsibility for ensuring high levels of pupil conduct and attitudes. Staff are increasingly taking responsibility for the behaviour of all pupils, and taking greater ownership for dealing with incidents as they occur. Leaders carefully scrutinise records of incidents to ensure staff are consistently implementing the new behaviour policy which was introduced in September 2015. This has been further supported by leaders ensuring that the playground has a greater range of activities during morning break.

Pupils' attendance is improving. Leaders and staff are promoting a culture of high attendance. They are challenging parents when their child's attendance is not high. However, persistent absence (those pupils who miss more than 10% of their school time) is still much too high. The academy and the trust accept that this figure must continue to be improved. They are determined to make sure that parents take greater responsibility for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and on time, so that each child achieves all they are capable of in their learning and life.

The interim executive board (IEB) has provided a high level of challenge to senior and middle leaders this academic year. Its members carefully check the implementation of the academy's improvement action plan to see whether changes are being implemented consistently. They have a clear understanding of the academy's current work and what still needs to be done. The IEB has now met for the final time and a local governing body takes over responsibility for its work in February 2016. All members of the IEB are joining the new governing body. Time has been spent ensuring that the other members of the governing body understand the academy and what is needed to secure further improvement. Parent governors have shadowed the IEB, and they have benefited from training provided by a national governor association.

The executive headteacher and his leadership team have a detailed plan for improvement. This has been well communicated to staff and they understand the expectations it places upon them. The plan is ambitious, with clear, measurable targets aimed at improving the areas identified for improvement by the previous section 5 inspection report. Leaders are using the plan as their central document for improving the academy. This is a working document which leaders update in the light of the review of governance and the pupil premium. They are proactively acting on the issues identified in the review to ensure that the academy keeps up the pace of improvement.

The IEB and the appropriate authority completed a statement of action following the section 5 inspection. Inspectors also deemed this document fit for purpose. This plan supports the academy's plan and shows clearly how the trust and academy governance will ensure the required actions are achieved.

The academy trust has provided a wide range of support and challenge. The trust has worked closely with the IEB to secure high-quality reviews of governance, pupil premium funding and the behaviour of pupils. They carefully chose external reviewers with a track record of delivering high-quality work in the past. This has ensured that no time has been wasted in getting detailed and accurate action plans in place to improve these aspects of the academy's work. The trust has also provided external support to secure the improvements seen in the nursery. An academy director visits the academy weekly to check on the progress of the academy's action plan for improvement. The weekly report that is produced helps to

chart improvements made and provide direct challenge to leaders. The report is also used by the trust to ensure the academy is making sufficient progress towards the removal of special measures. The trust representative accepted that the end-of-term formal quality assurance visit was not as clearly focused and could be improved to more closely match the areas identified for improvement in the previous inspection report.