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10 February 2016

Mrs Madeleine Bromley  
Headteacher  
Court Farm Primary School  
Tedbury Crescent  
Erdington  
Birmingham  
B23 5NS

Dear Mrs Bromley

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Court Farm Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 and 28 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015. 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. Appointments, if necessary, should be restricted to two newly qualified teachers as a maximum. They may be appointed to any year group provided appropriate support is made available to them.

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 for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Birmingham Education Partnership and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Deana Holdaway

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2015**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make faster progress and their attainment rises, by ensuring that:
  - all teachers use marking to identify misconceptions, give pupils clear guidance so that they know what to do to improve, check that pupils act on this advice and confirm that the pupils are secure in their understanding
  - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve in reading, writing and mathematics, and set demanding work for all pupils
  - all adults routinely check that pupils present their writing to a high standard.
  
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders at all levels:
  - rigorously and more frequently check and evaluate how well pupils are progressing and use the information to produce sharply focused plans to improve teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment
  - work with all teachers to ensure that they know how to improve their performance and keep detailed records which show how well they are improving so that governors are better able to hold leaders and teachers to account
  - develop an effective wider leadership team by developing teachers to lead specific aspects of school improvement work.
  
- Improve behaviour and safety by:
  - ensuring that all lessons contain sufficient challenge to maintain the concentration of all pupils and avoid some pupils causing distraction to the learning of others
  - improving communications with parents and, where necessary, external agencies to help eliminate bullying within the school.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 27 and 28 January 2016**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy and assistant headteachers, the subject leaders for literacy and mathematics, the coordinator for special educational needs, the inclusion leader, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and the national leader of education from the Learning Trust for Excellence. The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the Birmingham Education Partnership.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection in September 2015, two teachers have left and been replaced. A new assistant headteacher was appointed in January this year. A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected in autumn last year and there is now a full complement of governors. Consultations continue regarding the school's possible future academy status.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 and the results of the Year 1 phonics screening check were reported in the previous monitoring letter in September last year.

The majority of children achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year in 2015 and were well prepared to enter Year 1 in September. Particular strengths emerged in children's writing and their understanding of shape, space and measure. School records show that children entering Reception at the start of this academic year were generally confident and settled quickly. More than half the children, when they started, showed a weak understanding of number, writing, communication and language, making relationships, and understanding the world.

School leaders and staff are determined to raise standards by accelerating the progress pupils make over time, and to provide specific, tailored support where necessary. Leaders have set ambitious targets for the coming year. Teachers have developed a close cycle of assessing what pupils need to know, teaching them the knowledge and skills necessary and then assessing again how well the pupils have learned. These outcomes are recorded, tracked over time and considered by teachers and school leaders to identify quickly where pupils need additional help. In lessons, the most-able pupils respond well to the additional challenges expected of them. Pupils increasingly learn from each other. They are undaunted by occasional errors and consider mistakes to deepen their understanding. The school's records of pupils' progress indicate that the majority of pupils, in almost all year groups, are on

track to meet age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics this year.

The gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others in school are closing due to the effective targeted support provided. Pupils' language difficulties were analysed in detail to get to the source of the problem. Speech and language therapy was introduced for a group of pupils and their rapid improvement proved the case to develop this strand of support further. Checks are now made for children entering Reception so that their communication and language skills are developed securely.

Work in pupils' books shows improvement in the standard of presentation and accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils are increasingly attempting more complex sentence structures with expressive and descriptive language. They write for a range of purposes appropriate for their age and adopt suitable styles of writing for the task. Impressive progress is evident since December; errors have lessened and adventurous vocabulary has increased. A recent visit to the school by circus entertainers inspired pupils' imaginative writing. One pupil wrote, 'Inside the magical box was not what he was expecting – it was a massive world called 'the place in-between'. A Year 3 pupil wrote:

'Look at me way up high  
I'm trying to fly  
An experience serene  
Just look at that gorgeous scene'.

Mathematics books demonstrate suitable progress over time. Pupils cover a good range of mathematical topics suitable for their age. The school's recent focus on regular problem solving has demanded additional skills of pupils. They regularly explore their mathematical knowledge and understanding to select appropriate methods of calculation. The recently introduced theme weeks enable pupils to apply their skills in a range of investigations and purposes. These initial successes are at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, they are inspiring pupils' interest and reinforcing the idea that learning can be fun. Pupils have limited use of mathematical equipment to develop their practical mathematical skills.

Current Year 6 pupils have many gaps in their knowledge due to the legacy of underachievement in the past. Those pupils who are working at a standard just below expectations in reading, writing and mathematics receive additional, specific support to help them catch up. A significant proportion of pupils who are working at a standard below that expected for their age have special educational needs and are making expected progress from their starting points.

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

Teachers are developing suitably ambitious expectations of pupils and pupils have established high expectations of themselves. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and all staff are eager to further develop their teaching skills to ensure that pupils are consistently well taught.

Teachers are beginning to develop a clear understanding of the standards expected of their pupils and the small steps that must be achieved in order to meet age-related targets. They refer frequently to these steps and share them with pupils so that they are all on the journey together. Pupils and teachers consider how well the steps have been achieved. Pupils are increasingly confident in using the information and prompts on wall displays and on tables. Teachers question and closely observe their pupils to check their understanding. These checks inform day-to-day lesson plans so that teaching is focused on broadening pupils' knowledge, deepening their understanding and equipping them with the necessary skills. This approach is at an early stage of implementation but has led to measurable indications of improved pupils' progress.

Pupils enjoy the recently introduced challenges through theme weeks, such as 'the missing Mona Lisa' and the circus week. They are inspired by these themes, which require them to learn, investigate and apply reading, writing and mathematical skills for a range of purposes. Pupils write about a range of topics which include aspects taught in other subjects. They are given adequate time to plan, draft, develop ideas and then write. Pupils are keen to do well. They present their work correctly and imaginatively. Pupils are now making good progress and catching up on gaps in their previous learning.

Phonics and reading have a high profile in the school day. Daily phonics sessions help pupils to build systematically on their skills and apply them to reading and writing tasks. Teachers' regular day-to-day assessments of pupils ensure well-sequenced lessons so that pupils acquire the necessary skills and develop confidence in themselves. Trained adults known as 'reading squads' provide support for each group of pupils during guided reading sessions in lessons. As a result, pupils concentrate on the task in hand and keep on track. Pupils try hard and enjoy their success. All pupils of all abilities read to an adult in school each week. Additional support is provided for pupils experiencing reading difficulties. Most, but not all, classrooms have inviting and informative reading areas. Books, including non-fiction, are usually well organised and stored, but some teachers do not draw pupils' attention to different kinds of books, authors or styles.

Assessment procedures are rigorous and checked regularly. The school's policy for written feedback to pupils is manageable and implemented consistently.

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

In lessons, pupils remain alert, interested and self-motivated. They are keen to succeed. They concentrate well on tasks they are given and persist when challenges make them think.

During playtimes, pupils chatter in groups and make full use of the available apparatus and resources. They play cooperatively and show consideration for others. Pupils are well supervised at lunchtimes. Adults are quick to spot potential problems and resolve them before they escalate. Some resources could be used more effectively if adults organised games in suitable spaces for pupils.

Pupils are adamant that behaviour is now good. They explained that adults were helpful if concerns occurred. They were proud of the established group, Friends Against Bullying (FAB) and 'playground pals'. These pupils take their responsibilities seriously but they enjoy helping others and have earned respect. Pupils understand the difference between one-off incidents or differences of opinion and threatening behaviour. They know how to keep themselves safe in school, at home and when using the internet. Pupils are motivated by the house point and attendance awards. They are proud of their school. One pupil said, 'We are one family. We can trust the adults'. They also explained that lessons were now fun but that they were still learning. They enjoy the new level of challenge and they recognise that their confidence is improving.

Attendance is improving steadily but remains below the national average. Pupils are rewarded for good attendance and the prizes are important to them. The school tracks and investigates all absences. Persistent absence has reduced to a small group of pupils. Staff work closely with parents and provide support where appropriate. Nevertheless, the headteacher is prepared to pursue all available legal steps where attendance does not improve. Punctuality is also improving.

School leaders have developed a range of initiatives to involve and support parents. Some meetings help parents to support their children at home, for example for those pupils who have special educational needs. Other meetings provide information for parents on how to keep children safe using computers and social media. Parents of Reception children were able to work closely with staff to ensure their children settled into school quickly.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

Everyone is agreed that the school has turned a corner. The headteacher, staff and governors are determined that standards will improve. They are aware of the barriers to success but they do not allow problems to stand in their way. Pupils' difficulties and weaknesses are scrutinised so that reasons for stalled or delayed progress are identified and remedied. Well-timed support by adults with suitable

skills and knowledge is designed to meet pupils' specific needs. Leaders keep the outcomes of such support under frequent review and are quick to change tack if necessary. As a result, staff expertise is developing and is deployed flexibly to help accelerate pupils' progress.

The headteacher and senior leaders gather a full range of evidence to inform their views about the quality of teaching. They frequently observe lessons both formally and informally, look at pupils' work in their books and check their development. Leaders' feedback to teachers is well informed and development points are checked. There is a clear expectation that pupils' progress must be evident in their books. Regular meetings to review pupils' progress ensure that all staff are focused sharply on further improving rates of progress and raising standards.

The headteacher now consistently communicates her high expectations of staff. She is ably supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers, who bring the necessary subject and phase knowledge to inform future decisions. They identify priorities for improvement and steer staff's ongoing development and confidence. Together, leaders and staff are demonstrating far more capacity to improve and are beginning to rely less on external support.

The coordinator for special educational needs conducted an audit of children and their needs. She communicates well with parents to ensure that pupils' difficulties are understood and support is tailored to their needs. The coordinator works closely with the school's inclusion leader so that pastoral support is available where appropriate. Specialist support is provided where necessary and is developed by staff during the week. The coordinator has reviewed and updated the special needs policy so that it meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. She has begun the recommended training for special educational needs coordinators.

Governors are now an aspect of the school's strengths. The Chair of the Governing Body attracted the right people with the necessary expertise and quickly established a strong team spirit. The Chair has set clear expectations of all governors and ensured that all new governors, and those with particular responsibilities, received appropriate up-to-date training. Governors are well informed. They are confident to seek their own information rather than depend on headteacher reports. They are clearly focused on the school's progress towards improvement, raising pupils' standards and determining the resources to bring about success.

Leaders and governors are beginning to take responsibility for their own journey of continued improvement. Hard decisions have been made and significant weaknesses have been removed. Individuals are showing early signs of ability and determination to take the school forward. Initiatives are relatively new and not yet embedded but they are beginning to have the necessary impact on improving the quality of teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. It is now time to embed the systems that are clearly working and ensure that everyone applies them consistently.



## **External support**

Strong and effective support has been provided by the local Learning Trust for Excellence. The national leader of education has provided excellent support for the senior leadership team and enabled the necessary professional development for staff at all levels. The local solution of working with the trust has been particularly successful and all partners are keen to continue the arrangement.

Birmingham Education Partnership has conducted half-termly 'round table' reviews of the school's progress. A good range of evidence is presented at these meetings in order to reach accurate assessments of the school's progress.