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16 March 2016

Miss Nicola Fisher
Headteacher
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Birmingham
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Dear Miss Fisher

Special measures monitoring inspection of Moor Green Primary Academy

Following my visit with Jayne Thorpe, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 24–25 February 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 that 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 that took place in September 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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 school may appoint up to two newly qualified teachers if guidance and support is provided by a consistently effective teacher.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that 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, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - disadvantaged pupils make consistently good progress so 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 fifth monitoring inspection on 24–25 February 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the teachers with responsibilities for mathematics, the learning mentor and pupils. They also met with a representative from REAch2, the school's sponsor. Additionally, inspectors had a telephone conversation with the deputy chief education officer for REAch2. They also spoke informally with some parents and pupils during the inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined inspectors during visits to lessons. Inspectors reviewed examples of pupils' writing, mathematics and topic work with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Context

There have been a number of changes in staffing since the previous monitoring inspection. The deputy headteacher has left the school. The assistant headteacher has been appointed as the new deputy headteacher, with responsibility for leading developments in English. The teachers with responsibility for Years 1 and 2 and for Reception have relinquished their responsibilities. A temporary assistant headteacher will be joining the school at the end of February 2016. She will oversee the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. An associate leader from REAch2 has continued to provide some teachers with support.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide strong leadership. She has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and also where further improvements are required. The headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the associate leader provide teachers and teaching assistants with helpful support and guidance. This is helping staff to refine their practice and meet the learning needs of pupils more effectively than in the past. The headteacher is fully aware that teaching in a few classes is still not good enough. She has appropriate plans in place to tackle the remaining weaknesses in teaching.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher regularly check the work of staff through visits to lessons. They use these visits to identify the actions that teachers will take to help pupils make good progress. However, once these actions have been agreed, senior leaders do not check quickly enough that staff have made the required changes. This is leading to continued inconsistencies in teaching.

The majority of teachers are successfully helping pupils to gain the required knowledge and to learn relevant skills in a broad range of subjects. Pupils in Year 4, for instance, have explored similarities and differences between life now and during the reign of Queen Victoria, researched Victorian toys and correctly organised key historical events in chronological order. Work in pupils' topic books shows that the activities for pupils in Years 2 and 3 are sometimes too easy and that they do not help pupils build on what they can already do.

The majority of parents who spoke with inspectors were positive about the work of the school. They commended the improvements in their children's learning, communication with parents, pupils' behaviour and the work of the headteacher. A few parents raised concerns about bullying and the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Pupils told inspectors, and school records confirm, that incidents of bullying are infrequent. When they do occur, staff take appropriate and prompt action. Since the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher has taken suitable action to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive the support to which they are entitled. The headteacher is planning to meet with relevant parents to discuss and review the support for these pupils.

Senior leaders and staff continue to ensure that pupils are safe. The headteacher and learning mentor have taken effective action to strengthen the school's systems for recording information in relation to pupils' safety. An electronic programme, for instance, enables senior leaders to record any concerns staff may have and to keep a close check on the well-being of individual pupils. Records show that staff in the early years are checking that the classroom and outdoor learning areas are safe for children much more frequently. Nevertheless, staff do not ensure that their records of these checks are kept up to date. REAch2 was undertaking a review of the school's safeguarding procedures at the same time as this monitoring inspection.

Governance arrangements remain unsatisfactory. There have been no formal opportunities for governors to meet since September 2015. Additionally, no one has checked the impact of the additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals or looked after children since this time. REAch2 had planned for members of the local governing body to meet in January 2016. This deadline was missed. A meeting is now planned for the end of February. Members of the REAch2 trust board have discussed the achievement of pupils in the school. This information will be examined in more detail at the forthcoming local governing body meeting. Since the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher has met regularly with a REAch2 representative to discuss the actions taken by senior leaders and prioritise future actions. Nevertheless, these discussions have not provided the headteacher with sufficient external challenge because they have not focused enough on the difference senior leaders are making to the quality of teaching and to the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching has continued to improve. Most teachers have responded well to the support and training they have received from senior leaders, the associate leader and REAch2. Senior leaders are aware that inconsistencies remain and further work is required to ensure that teaching in all year groups helps pupils to make good progress.

The majority of teachers make sure that the activities for pupils who have special educational needs or disability are suitably challenging. They also make sure that these pupils receive prompt support during lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants, including in the early years, work together well to ask questions that effectively promote and develop pupils' speaking skills.

Where pupils make the most rapid gains in learning, teachers use the information they have about pupils' achievement to plan activities that effectively meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Teachers provide pupils with activities that deepen their understanding. They also plan activities that engage both boys and girls. Pupils, and especially the boys, told inspectors that they appreciate it when teachers tell them exactly what they are expected to learn by the end of the lessons. In one instance, a teacher in Year 4 asked pupils to debate the pros and cons of building a supermarket on some local waste ground. The teacher provided the pupils with clear instructions and reminded them to use persuasive vocabulary. All pupils thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the debate and used relevant language to justify the reasons for their views.

Not all teachers make sure that pupils make enough progress. This is especially the case in Reception, and Years 2 and 3. In these year groups, standards are not rising as quickly as in the rest of the school. Work in pupils' books and visits to lessons show that teachers' expectations of most-able pupils are not always high enough. As a result, the activities for pupils are too easy and do not take pupils' learning forward. In contrast, the activities for pupils who have special educational needs or disability are sometimes too difficult for pupils to complete on their own.

Teaching remains variable in Reception. The activities that staff plan successfully motivate children and encourage them to want to find out more. During this inspection, a group of children boarded a 'rocket' and counted accurately before launching into 'space'. Another group of children asked insightful questions about the food an astronaut eats. However, there are insufficient opportunities for children to develop their writing skills. This is hindering children's progress in writing. Additionally, the activities that children choose to complete on their own are on occasions too easy. They do not always help children to deepen or build on their previous learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils continue to behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and welcoming towards each other, staff and visitors. Pupils in Years 4 to 6 are particularly confident and enthusiastic learners. They respond well to a challenge and take pride in the quality of the work they produce across all subjects. In other year groups, most pupils behave well, but occasionally some pupils become restless. This tends to happen when activities fail to capture their interest.

The playground is a calm place. Pupils share play equipment with each other and enjoy participating in games organised by the sport coaches and the Year 6 pupil play leaders. Pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that they feel safe and that staff listen to them if they have any concerns. The small number of pupils who sometimes find it difficult to behave well, continue to benefit from the support they receive from the school's learning mentor. Academy records confirm that the behaviour of these pupils is continuing to improve.

Pupils' attendance remains below the national average for primary schools. Academy leaders have extended the range of rewards to promote good attendance. As a result, some recent improvement is evident. The number of pupils who are regularly absent from the school has improved significantly since the last monitoring inspection. Senior leaders are aware of the need to encourage pupils to attend regularly and to ensure that pupils are punctual at the start of the day.

Outcomes for pupils

Work in pupils' books and the school's information about pupils' achievement confirm that, although standards remain below national expectations, they are rising and pupils are making better progress than in the past. Nevertheless, rates of progress remain variable because of continued inconsistencies in teaching.

Senior leaders are making better use of the information they have about individual pupils' achievement. They meet regularly with class teachers to organise additional support for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This additional support is helping pupils to catch up with their learning. Despite this additional support, there are still wide gaps between the standards attained by different groups of pupils in a few classes. In some classes, boys do not achieve as well as girls, and in others pupils eligible for additional funding do not achieve as well as their classmates. Senior leaders acknowledge the need to focus more on what class teachers need to do to close these gaps.

The actions taken by senior leaders to help pupils make better progress in reading are having a beneficial impact. Additional targeted support for groups of pupils is helping them to get better at using their knowledge of phonics to read new words. While older pupils choose to read regularly at home, this is not always the case for the younger pupils. Academy leaders are considering ways in which they can encourage all pupils to read at home more regularly.

Pupils, especially in Years 4 to 6, are becoming skilful writers and are taking greater pride in their writing. They are increasingly writing neatly, spelling correctly, and using punctuation and grammar accurately. In contrast, some younger pupils continue to produce untidy work and make spelling, grammar and punctuation errors when they write in different subjects. The majority of teachers make sure that pupils learn how to write for different purposes. As a result, pupils know how to write diary entries, newspaper reports and stories. Nevertheless, opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their writing skills are underdeveloped.

Teachers continue to benefit from support and training provided by the teacher with responsibility for mathematics. As a consequence, most teachers continue to ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. Teachers are increasingly providing pupils with activities that challenge and deepen pupils' mathematical thinking.

External support

The training events organised by REAch2 and the associate leader have contributed to the improvements in teaching. From next term, the associate leader will increase the number of days she works at the school so that she can provide more support for teachers. REAch2 has been unable to meet its own deadline for members of the local governing body to meet. The deputy chief executive officer of REAch2 is aware of this and informed inspectors that a meeting will take place before the end of this month.