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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 with Michael Onyon, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 23–24 September 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 second 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:

The school is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 acting Chair of the Governing Body 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 which 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 second monitoring inspection on 23–24 September 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the coordinator for special educational needs, the leader of the early years, the acting Chair of the Governing Body, a group of Year 6 pupils, the national leader for education (NLE), the assistant headteacher of Little Sutton Primary School and a representative of the Birmingham Educational Partnership.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in May 2015, the Chair of the Governing Body resigned and the Vice-Chair accepted the temporary position of acting Chair of the Governing Body. There have been no staff changes. The school is at an early stage of considering future academy status.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015 remained well below the national figures for 2014. Too few pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, made sufficient progress in reading and writing from their different starting points. The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2015 fell below the 2014 figures. The school's records indicate an improvement in the proportion of Reception children who achieved a good level of development. Standards improved at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of pupils' written presentation is improving but basic errors in letter formation and spelling remain. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 classes show too little awareness of the range of punctuation expected for their age. Pupils write for different purposes but their knowledge of the necessary writing features is weak. The older pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge and skills due to prolonged underachievement in the past. Pupils have too little practical experience of developing and applying mathematical skills. They are unable to use everyday language to talk about size, weight or capacity. Pupils of all ages lack confidence in choosing or using different units of measure and they have little experience of solving mathematical problems.

The quality of teaching

Pupils report that teachers are stricter and, as a consequence, teaching is better and lessons are more interesting.

Older pupils understand their short-term targets and are keen to achieve them. However, they explained that they would like to know where the targets sit in relation to the bigger picture of their learning journey ahead so that they can better understand their relevance.

Children in Reception are settling in quickly. They set about their tasks in pairs, small groups or independently and show sustained interest and concentration. All activities are well planned and resourced. Adults make themselves readily available to discuss, explain or question. Children are suitably confident to ask for help, if needed. The early years leader has lost no time in making accurate initial assessments of the children's abilities and skills. The range of planned activities provides opportunities for adults to observe children and record their findings with precision and confidence.

Teachers of all age groups clearly explain the learning purpose in any lesson. They provide clear guidance on what the pupils must do in tasks to meet the teachers' expectations. Additional adults in lessons effectively support pupils. They waste no time in working with their assigned groups. They provide clear explanations and show sufficient subject knowledge to ensure pupils' understanding. Classroom displays on walls and printed desk-top prompts provide pupils with additional information and help. These strategies are at an early stage of development and pupils still ask adults for assistance rather than seeking solutions for themselves.

Teachers do not consistently plan lessons to ensure that pupils learn, practise, apply and develop skills over time. As a consequence, pupils do not progress with the necessary speed to make up for the historical gaps in their knowledge and skills. Where skills are developed more effectively, pupils are required to apply them for a range of purposes and in different subjects. In these lessons, pupils appreciate the importance of the skills and try hard to develop them further. Pupils are willing to share ideas and they are happy to learn from each other. Until recently, lessons, particularly in mathematics, were driven by published schemes. Teachers now take more control of pupils' learning by matching the subject needs with appropriate and interesting resources and stimuli.

The quality and precision of teachers' written feedback to pupils varies. In the main, the comments are specific and relevant to the intended learning. Many teachers have adopted the policy of writing 'next steps' and some provide time for pupils to practise these development points. Nevertheless, comments have little impact on pupils' progress when teachers fail to check that pupils have adopted their guidance in future work.

Most teachers use their questioning to check on pupils' understanding or to share pupils' knowledge. However, a few teachers allow pupils to call out their answers and then move on to the next point or question. In these circumstances, teachers are unable to determine who knows what or to check on misconceptions. As a result,

they are unable to adapt their teaching, explanations or demands according to the needs of the pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils, staff and parents are clear that behaviour in the school has improved. Pupils consistently display good manners towards each other and adults. Even the youngest children take turns and share equipment in activities. Pupils confirmed in discussions with an inspector that there was no bullying and groups, such as Friends Against Bullying and playground pals, ensured that pupils' worries were heard, considered, resolved or reported if necessary.

In lessons, pupils of all ages knew routines well and settled quickly to new activities. They listened to explanations and instructions and persevered with set tasks. At playtimes, pupils played cooperatively with friends or small groups. There were no incidents of rough play or spiteful behaviour. Pupils are well supervised.

Attendance is improving slowly but remains below the national average. Leaders challenge persistent absence and reward improved attendance. Leaders track pupils' attendance. However, they have not analysed the information to assess the possible impact of pupils' absence on their rates of progress.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher is sharply focused on the agreed priorities to bring about speedy and sustainable improvements. She has developed a determined ambition for the pupils to achieve their best but is equally resolute to improve teaching and all levels of school leadership. All staff receive substantial training, ongoing support and individual coaching. This model will continue for some time and will focus on the clear expectations leaders now have of staff. Leaders are confident to use all of the available performance management procedures to tackle persistent weaknesses in teaching.

School leaders frequently check on the quality of teaching, provide feedback and check on the completion of all development points. They conduct lesson observations and keep a track of pupils' progress in all classes. Teachers are increasingly held to account for their pupils' rates of progress.

Leaders have revised their plan for school improvement. The plan is suitably detailed and includes all areas for improvement identified at the previous section 5 inspection. Staff responsible for leading specific actions for improvement are identified throughout. Planned timescales are clear and there is a suitable balance between urgency and development over time. The actions are suitably detailed and lead to clear expected outcomes. The responsibilities for monitoring the school's progress and evaluating its effectiveness are appropriate.

The coordinator for special educational needs took up her post in May this year and she is at an early stage of reviewing the current provision. There has been no recent review of pupils' specific needs. There is a lack of clarity about those pupils who have special educational needs and those who have specific learning difficulties which have caused them to fall behind. Information about the pupils is often unnecessarily duplicated and difficult to access or analyse. The current policy for special educational needs does not refer directly to the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2014. It is unclear how the expected process of assess, plan, do and review will work in practice. Leaders have recently changed the arrangements for pupils' support so that they receive more targeted and regular help.

The governing body has reconstituted and responded quickly and effectively to the resignation of the Chair of the Governing Body. The acting Chair is keen to fulfil her duties and responsibilities. She will work closely with a National Leader of Governance from Plantsbrook School to provide the necessary support. Governors have received a range of training to help equip them for their responsibilities, and further training is booked for the autumn term. Two new committees are now established: one for standards and performance and another for the school site and finance. Link governors have specific responsibilities for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, pupil premium, safeguarding, and sex and relationship education (SRE).

The school remains at a very early stage of negotiation regarding its transition to academy status. Local options for possible sponsors are being investigated.

External support

The NLE continues to provide highly valued support for school leaders and staff. She is rigorous and tireless in her determined drive to bring about the necessary improvements. She attends the school one day per week. In addition, her assistant headteacher from Little Sutton Primary School attends two days per week to assist with the coaching and checks on the quality of teaching. The NLE has rightly begun to develop the roles of subject leaders so that leadership responsibilities are further distributed. The NLE routinely joins the headteacher and deputy headteacher on their fortnightly checks of teaching, learning and assessment. She has effectively modelled professional feedback, including development points. Teachers now receive consistent evaluations about the quality of their work and areas for improvement. She knows the school well. She keeps a close eye on the rates of pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of support.

The local authority's role in school improvement is now contracted to the Birmingham Educational Partnership (BEP), a charitable company. The handover of responsibilities to support Court Farm is at an early stage of transition. A district leader has been appointed to the school to review the school's progress and the effectiveness of the support provided. BEP has taken over the local authority's role

of the monitoring task force which conducted half-termly reviews of the school's progress. This function will in future be conducted by the BEP's round-table review.

At the time of the last monitoring inspection, the local authority's statement of action was judged not fit for purpose. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that the statement of action is now adequately supported by a detailed school improvement plan. The statement of action is now fit for purpose.