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Mr Colin Apps
Drapers Mills Primary Academy
St. Peter's Pathway
Margate
Kent
CT9 2SP

Dear Mr Apps

Special measures monitoring inspection of Drapers Mills Primary Academy

Following my visit with Matthew Newberry, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 22 and 23 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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:

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

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint one NQT in the early years only.

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 Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Dr Simon Hughes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2014

- Improve significantly the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
 - making sure that activities are sufficiently challenging and interesting for pupils of all abilities
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve and the minimum rate at which their learning should proceed
 - ensuring that teachers use information about what pupils already know to set work at the right levels of difficulty for all pupils
 - ensuring that pupils are taught phonics more systematically
 - improving marking so that teachers' comments consistently make it clear to pupils how they should improve their work.

- Rapidly accelerate pupils' progress in all subjects, but especially in writing, by:
 - ensuring that they organise, develop and communicate their ideas by writing at length in a range of subjects
 - ensuring that pupils who find reading difficult have frequent opportunities to practise with suitable books
 - closing gaps for pupils supported through the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs with other pupils in the school
 - ensuring that the most-able pupils achieve higher levels of attainment.

- Increase the impact of leaders on raising standards by:
 - ensuring that all teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning more quickly and plan to address them more effectively
 - ensuring checks on pupils' attainment and progress are accurate, especially in those areas where pupils underperform most significantly
 - improving the quality of improvement plans so that indicators of success are more precise and those responsible for implementing actions can be held more effectively to account
 - ensuring that subject leaders are held to account more effectively for bringing about improvements in their areas of responsibility.

- Strengthen the impact of governance by:
 - holding senior leaders to account more effectively for progress towards the targets detailed in the school improvement plan
 - ensuring that senior leaders develop more effective strategies for engaging with parents and carers, and raising their confidence in the work of the academy.

External reviews of governance and the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 September 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other academy leaders. Inspectors also met the executive headteacher, the deputy chief executive officer of The Kennal Academies Trust (TKAT), and the chair of the TKAT board. The lead inspector met the recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body and a large group of parents.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the head of school has been appointed as the permanent headteacher of the academy. The other head of school left the academy and was replaced with a new deputy headteacher during the summer term 2015. Eight teachers have left the academy. The academy has successfully recruited new teachers to fill the jobs. A large minority of pupils join the academy for short periods of time. Some leave for a few months and then return. The number of pupils attending the academy varies from week to week. Over time, the proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language has been rising steadily. The interim executive board that was in place at the last monitoring inspection has been replaced by a new board of governors.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes for children in the early years are improving. The proportion of children who attained a good level of development was much closer to the national average in 2015 than in 2014. In 2015, a slightly higher proportion of pupils made the expected amount of progress in reading by the end of Year 6. Standards in writing were much better with 88% making the expected amount of progress. In mathematics, 79% of pupils made expected progress in 2015 compared with 55% in 2014. However, despite these improvements, overall, these outcomes remain below the government's expected floor standards.

Pupils typically join the academy below standards expected for their age. Although the majority make the expected level of progress, by the time they leave the academy, far too many have still not caught up with their peers in other schools. As a result, the majority do not attain the levels expected at the end of Key Stage 2. This is because pupils, over a lengthy period of time, did not receive teaching that was skilful enough to accelerate their learning. In Year 6, for example, many still have important gaps in their knowledge, skills or understanding.

This is changing. You have taken effective action to improve teaching in all classes. In the early years, these actions are causing rapid improvements. Inspectors saw evidence of strong work supporting learning in all areas of the Early Years

Foundation Stage. They also saw high-quality journals which show clearly the good progress each child is making. Children in the early years benefit from an exemplary learning environment. Teachers plan each session carefully so that all activities contribute purposefully to children's learning. Teachers and their assistants record carefully each step in learning achieved by a child and ensure that they repeat learning so that it sticks.

Gaps remain between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. There are wide gaps between these pupils and other pupils nationally. Similar gaps exist for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Most-able pupils still do not do as well as they should.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is improving. You have been successful in recruiting a group of teachers who are committed to the academy. You have also provided good quality training regularly so that the staff are able to improve continuously. Some strong practice exists, notably in the early years, and this is spreading across the academy. Teachers frequently work together to share ideas and learn from each other. As a result, the quality overall of teaching is much better than at my last monitoring inspection. You have rightly identified some areas of the academy where teaching still requires improvement. You showed inspectors a range of measures you are taking to address this.

One of the emerging strengths is the effective use of questioning. Some pupils were asked questions which really probed their knowledge and understanding. Most-able pupils especially benefited from this. Inspectors saw many examples of where teachers had obviously shared their planning in year groups. This ensured that pupils in all classes had an equal opportunity to learn important parts of the curriculum. It also meant that teachers made more efficient use of their time outside the classroom. In the large sample of work seen by inspectors, there was clear evidence that all teachers are now using the new, very clear marking policy. This is having an immediate impact on the quality of pupils' work. Pupils like the comments teachers make in their books. They also like the rewards that they sometimes receive for work that is of a high standard. Parents also appreciate this. However, pupils are still not receiving enough opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

In the early years and in Key Stage 1, pupils are now taught phonics (letters and the sounds they make) systematically. Pupils increasingly read with confidence earlier in their time at the academy. This is supported by a number of reading schemes. The library is becoming a much richer source of books suited to the ages of the pupils.

Leaders have also ensured that teachers now have an informed picture of what each pupil knows, understands and is able to do. Teachers have access to a wealth of

information to help them ensure that their teaching meets the needs of everyone in their class. Not all are using this as well as they could so that some pupils still get work that is too easy and some, too hard. When teaching is most effective, it is supported by a team of enthusiastic, well-trained and skilful teaching assistants. Some provide challenge and support to pupils whose behaviour is preventing them from settling down to work. Others teach small groups directly, enabling the class teacher to concentrate their effort where it is most needed. Leaders are to be commended for re-organising the teaching assistants so that they now make a valuable contribution to the academy.

Leaders are also to be commended for creating an effective team of middle leaders. Teachers have their work checked much more regularly. They receive positive feedback when things are going well. Teachers are also held to account when their performance falls short of the much higher expectations that are now in place.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Since the last monitoring inspection there has been a marked improvement in pupils' behaviour. Safeguarding arrangements have been strengthened too, so that there has been a reduction in the number of incidents of poor behaviour and pupils feeling unsafe. Teachers are much more effective at applying consistently the well-worked out and thoughtful behaviour management actions. Inspectors saw no poor behaviour during the inspection. Occasionally, some pupils were seen to be distracted or fidgety. Pupils told inspectors that they get annoyed when other pupils disrupt their lessons but also said that this happens rarely now.

Pupils are increasingly proud of the academy. They are all taking much greater pride in their work and the presentation of their books. Pupils have become adept at setting out their work neatly, particularly in mathematics. Pupils have also started to take more responsibility around the academy and have begun, for example, to practise democracy by holding elections to be members of their junior leadership team. The academy is committed to building a cohesive community. It ensures that all pupils grow up understanding the importance of fundamental British values. It also ensures that pupils have lessons and assemblies that support their spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development. Children in the early years understand the importance of taking turns and sharing. Older pupils understand that racism is always wrong and that using derogatory language or swearing goes against the Drapers Mills' values. Pupils increasingly exhibit an appropriate understanding of the difference between right and wrong.

Pupils are learning to play well together and include everyone in games. This is also the case when they need to work together in class. Teachers are increasingly confident in using the diversity that exists in the community. At the school's summer fête, a brass band performed for the crowd as did a group of dancers of Eastern European heritage.

Pupils' attendance is still not good enough. There is considerable variation in the attendance patterns of different groups of pupils. Leaders have made all reasonable endeavours to improve attendance including issuing fixed penalty notices, visiting families to explain the importance of attendance, not authorising absence related to holidays and employing 'Attendance Ted'. Pupils respond well to this rewards-based approach to encouraging school attendance. Regrettably, attendance overall remains stubbornly low even though these strategies have proved effective in some cases. It is particularly affected by the constant coming and going of some families. Compared with figures nationally for pupils who change schools partway through a key stage, the absence and persistent absence of this group of pupils at Drapers Mills are well above average.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

You have risen admirably to the challenge of leading this academy out of special measures. You have taken effective action across a wide range of the academy's work. For example, you have strengthened the leadership team, improved the site security, upgraded significantly the academy's safeguarding arrangements, created a calm and orderly environment, engaged much more effectively with the parents and significantly improved the website. You have been ably supported in this by TKAT's regional director. You work well as a team and you include many of your staff in leadership activities. They feel valued, as a result, and many commented how much they now enjoy working at the academy. Parents told inspectors that you communicate with them well. They also said that the academy has improved dramatically since the new leadership team was put in place.

Leaders still need to improve the accuracy with which information is recorded, interpreted and used. For example, inspectors found errors in figures relating to attendance and attainment. You do not have precise enough information about which groups of pupils have the weakest attendance. Also, your forecasts of likely results are less reliable than they should be. This is because you do not always compare the pupils' standards against the same benchmarks used by all schools nationally.

You and your team are working to an extensive action plan. You have included everything that you are aware needs to be changed. As a result, the current plan lacks focus and a clear set of priorities, though it is much improved from my first visit. You are adjusting the plan to ensure that progress is made against all the areas for improvement set out in the last full inspection (June 2014). You agreed that each aspect of the plan needs to be overseen by one of the senior leaders. You also agreed that priorities in the plan should be reflected in senior leaders' performance management.

Leadership of the early years is a strength of the academy. Strong leadership has led to improvements in teaching. Improved teaching has led to much quicker learning

and, consequently, children are much better prepared for entering Year 1 than previously. This area of the academy has much to offer the wider education community. It is, therefore appropriate to approve the appointment of a newly qualified teacher in this key stage only.

Governance needs to improve further. TKAT oversees the academy's progress through its Thanet Regional Executive Board. In May 2015, the executive board disbanded the academy's interim executive board and replaced it with a local governing body. It recruited a new Chair of the Governing Body. Governors have met twice since then. There are four governors currently and meetings are also attended by eight members of the academy's extended leadership team. No record of governors' interests was found in the documents you provided about governors' work. Minutes of governors' meetings are also in need of improvement so that a robust account of the business is recorded. The new Chair of the Governing Body knows the academy well and has already formed an understanding of the challenges it faces. She is already challenging leaders at all levels over teachers' performance and the standards achieved by pupils. She does this during her regular visits to the academy.

External support

TKAT continues to provide robust challenge to the academy. It has scaled back the amount of support from its central Thanet team, mainly because it has judged the academy's leaders to be taking effective action and leading necessary improvements. You are receiving good quality support from specialist agencies. The education welfare service is helping to tackle the challenge of poor attendance. Adult and children's social care provide necessary support to help overcome some of the barriers to learning experienced by a large minority of your pupils. You have sought support from schools in the London area for your work with those who have English as an additional language. Staff have received expert advice and guidance for using many of the teaching schemes you have adopted to try to raise pupils' attainment.