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31 March 2016

Mrs Sally Bloomer  
Woodside Community School and Little Bears Nursery  
Highgate Road  
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West Midlands  
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Dear Mrs Bloomer

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Woodside Community School and Little Bears Nursery**

Following my visit with Michael Appleby, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 March 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2015. 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.

The school may appoint no more than one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress so that they reach at least average standards by the time they leave Year 6 by ensuring that teachers:
  - deal effectively with low-level disruption in Key Stage 2
  - check more frequently that pupils in all years are working hard
  - assess pupils' work accurately in Key Stage 2
  - set pupils suitably demanding tasks in Key Stage 2 and the early years
  - provide more opportunities for pupils to speak at length.
  
- Improve behaviour and reduce the number of incidents of physical violence towards other pupils, so that fewer pupils are excluded from school, by:
  - checking the current strategies for helping individual pupils modify their behaviour to find out which ones work best
  - using the most successful approaches more frequently
  - ensuring pupils attend the extra classes that are provided for them
  - encouraging pupils to report racist and derogatory language.
  
- Improve attendance to at least the national average by:
  - writing to parents when their child's attendance falls below 92%
  - analysing attendance data in greater depth to identify emerging patterns of poor attendance
  - analysing data on the attendance of disadvantaged pupils in order to target extra funding at helping them to attend more frequently.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - setting more demanding targets for teachers' performance that include improving pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics
  - taking stronger and more decisive actions more quickly when a teacher's performance is found to be inadequate
  - using all available evidence to evaluate the quality of teaching more accurately
  - developing the role of subject and other leaders in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their areas of responsibility
  - ensuring teachers cover the requirements of the national curriculum in full at Key Stage 2
  - checking the effectiveness of extra support outside of lessons for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs more closely and

- modifying such support when it is clear that it is not proving successful
- making more effective use of the extra pupil premium funds to accelerate the progress and improve the behaviour and attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of the school'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 second monitoring inspection on 15 March 2016 to 16 March 2016**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, inspectors carried out observations of teaching and learning in all year groups and looked at pupils' work in books and on display. Inspectors talked with pupils in lessons and in the playground. They also spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.

The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, the early years leader, subject leaders, members of the pastoral support team, pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors examined several school documents including: pupils' progress information, the school's own evaluation of its performance, school improvement plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and several school policy documents. The school's single central record of safeguarding checks on staff was also examined.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection in December 2015, there have been a few staff changes. An assistant headteacher took up this new post at the school in February 2016. Two new teachers started in January 2016; one in Reception and one in Year 1. The Year 1 teacher left after a few weeks, so temporary arrangements are in place for teaching this class. Two other classes are being taught by temporary teachers, while permanent members of staff are on family leave.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, senior leaders have maintained their focus on the need to raise standards. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the newly appointed assistant headteacher have complementary strengths and form a capable team. Their written evaluations of the school's current performance are largely accurate and they have made their ambitions for school improvement clear to all. Having said this, some lines of communication between senior leaders and middle leaders could be better. While all staff understand that the school's performance needs to improve and that changes to ways of working are necessary, they do not always understand the reasons behind some decisions. This is causing anxiety in places.

Subject leaders have made sure that teachers follow agreed school policies for planning lessons and marking pupils' work. They have also checked work in pupils' books, observed some teaching and given feedback to staff. To date, however, they have not examined how well the quality of teaching is helping to lift standards. Their leadership work has focused on checking compliance with school policy rather

than the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

The quality of leadership in the early years has improved considerably. The early years leader has brought many changes for the better, and has done more this term to create a sense of team spirit and pride within the early years team. This has lifted morale and standards in the classroom.

The support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs continues to improve. In fact, it is emerging as an area of strength in the school. The provision for pupils with behavioural, emotional, physical or learning needs is well organised, carefully thought through and increasingly effective at helping pupils to make the most of their time in school. The special educational needs manager keeps on top of matters and is largely successful in making sure that the right pupils get the right support at the right time.

The attendance and behaviour of disadvantaged pupils have both improved. The pastoral team's detailed records show this very clearly. Indeed, the thoroughness of their record keeping allows them to keep an informed and watchful eye on all matters relating to pupils' well-being. They are quick to spot patterns and take action in response. This could be writing to parents about their child's low attendance or providing targeted support to improve a pupil's behaviour. In both these circumstances, their work and attention to detail is paying off.

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

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Low-level disruption in class is now rarely a problem. In all classes, pupils follow the rules and are kept productively occupied. Teachers' lesson planning and the way they mark pupils' work are consistent across the school, and leaders make regular checks on these aspects.

Increasingly, teachers plan work that challenges pupils to think hard and do their best. The work provided to the most-able pupils, for instance, frequently requires them to exercise some deep thinking and to push themselves on further in their learning. In one upper Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, for example, the level of challenge moved on swiftly. The teacher made sure that the most-able pupils' understanding of algebra was explored and developed in depth by a sequence of tasks that grew progressively more difficult. For pupils who were not so sure about algebra, checks on their understanding were rather brief and a few pupils found it hard to keep up with the pace of the lesson. In another example, also in mathematics, Year 5 pupils displayed a good understanding of the principles of reflective symmetry, but some were careless with their measurements and drawings. This carelessness caused them to make errors. Careless presentation with handwriting and the setting out of work is evident across the school.

Work in pupils' books tends to show that, in several cases, teachers are more confident when teaching English than mathematics. When planning and checking pupils' written work, for example, teachers usually help pupils to build progressively on their existing skills. Teachers give helpful advice about what to do next and pick up on what needs to be done in response to the errors that pupils have made. The work in pupils' mathematics books presents a different picture. In some instances, pupils who understand work are simply given more of the same to do. At other times, when pupils make mistakes they are not given work or advice that helps them to understand where they went wrong and why. On top of this, teaching sometimes moves on to new subjects before pupils understand what they have just covered. This leads to gaps in their understanding which undermine their confidence and performance in mathematics. This is not the case in all classes. In Year 4, for instance, mathematics teaching does build carefully on what different pupils know. Here, pupils are developing a better understanding of their work.

All in all, while inspectors' observations and checks on books found the quality of teaching to be improving, some significant variations remain. For the most part, these variations have their roots in shortcomings in the use of assessment information and teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics. Whether responding to pupils' needs in lessons or pupils' work after lessons, some teachers pay insufficient attention to pupils' current level of understanding. This is something that school leaders now need to address with urgency.

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

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and in the playground has improved. During this inspection all lessons proceeded smoothly, and pupils were obedient and respectful. Pupils who need support to manage aspects of their behaviour benefit from the extra help they receive. Indeed, some pupils who have received guidance and support in response to their poor behaviour could tell inspectors how it has helped them to improve their behaviour. In conversation with an inspector, pupils explained that 'if you have anger issues you can get help with anger management so you can do better', and provided examples drawn from their own experiences to illustrate this.

While there is a whole-school behaviour policy in place, the teachers in Year 3 are experimenting with a new approach called the 'behaviour game' to see how it works. The 'game' requires pupils to work together in small groups while following certain rules. Pupils and staff report that this experimental approach is working well and has improved behaviour in both Year 3 classes. Nevertheless, some of the rules discourage pupils from developing decision-making skills, so school leaders are thinking carefully about the long-term use of this approach. For the time being,

however, it is helping pupils who find it hard to settle to cope much better in class.

Playtimes outside are usually trouble-free, but tempers can flare from time to time, usually because of disagreements during games of football. Sometimes these upsets erupt into fights or aggressive pushing and shoving, but this is not commonplace and incidents are usually dealt with quickly. For those pupils who struggle to cope with the hurly-burly of the playground, the school's 'rainbow room' and 'snoozelum' continue to provide safe havens where they can be peaceful.

Adult supervision outside is adequate, but in the large and busy playground adults are not easy to spot. Consequently, pupils who need adult help for any reason cannot always find it quickly. Inside the dining hall it can be very noisy, and some pupils display poor table manners. In some instances, lunchtime supervisors do not correct rude behaviour at the dining table, even when it happens right in front of them.

Pupils and staff report that incidents of pupils using racist and other unpleasant language have continued to be reduced. The school pastoral team keeps a careful log of any such behaviour, and staff are quick to challenge it and stop it. Nevertheless, while it is not the problem it used to be, it still happens.

Attendance has improved. This year so far it stands at 95.5%, which is only just below average and better than it was this time last year. The work of the schools' pastoral team deserves a special mention here. This team's attention to attendance and attendance-related matters cannot be faulted. As noted in the previous monitoring letter, staff follow up unnecessary or unexplained absence without fear or favour. Parents of pupils who miss too much school without good reason are told in no uncertain terms that it is unfair to their children and that attendance must improve. It is clear that families are heeding this message, because absence has been reduced. However, poor punctuality in the morning remains a significant problem. Since September 2015, there have been 656 recorded late arrivals for school. There are justifiable reasons in some cases, but most excuses are weak and do not help pupils to develop good habits that will assist them now and in later life. School leaders are quite right to challenge parents who fail to get their children to school on time.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

As pupils progress through the school, standards are rising. Early indications show that the proportion of children who will reach a good level of development at the end of early years is set to rise again this year.

Across Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are not too far below what one would expect for pupils of this age. However, looking at work in Key Stage 2, it is clear that some considerable variations remain. While the most

able are being pushed to tackle some demanding work with success, some pupils are still not making enough progress, especially in mathematics. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have some catching up to do if they are to reach the standards that they should.

Like many schools, Woodside Community School is still finding its way with a new form of assessment now that national curriculum levels have gone. Having abandoned the first new system they tried, leaders and governors have confidence that the current system, in place since Christmas, is the right one for the school. There have been a few 'teething problems' as staff get to grips with the new format but, overall, school leaders' evaluative and realistic approach to this important new development indicates that such problems are likely to be overcome sooner rather than later.

### **External support**

External support continues to be effective. The local authority's education improvement adviser makes regular visits to the school and has arranged support from several different consultants. A local authority review of the school took place in February 2016 and generated some useful feedback. In addition, the school continues to benefit from supportive links with Hales Valley Teaching School and Russells Hall Primary School.