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Vivienne Cranton
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Dear Mrs Cranton

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Fairfield Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15–16 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 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 newly qualified teachers 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 Worcestershire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

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 in order to accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach essential skills in reading, writing and mathematics well
 - teachers plan and teach logical sequences of lessons which take account of pupils' previous learning and develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in each subject
 - the tasks in each lesson meet the needs of all pupils, including the most able and those with disabilities and special educational needs
 - teachers' feedback, both written and verbal, helps to move pupils on in their learning
 - all teachers use teaching assistants effectively so that they have a positive impact on pupils' progress in every lesson.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - ensuring that all pupils know how they are expected to behave in lessons in order to learn successfully and all staff consistently and positively reinforce this
 - minimising the use of physical intervention and exclusion by developing a broader range of strategies to support pupils with more complex and challenging behaviour and checking that all staff apply these strategies consistently
 - ensuring that staff on duty at lunchtime act as role models and teach good manners and social skills.

- Improve pupils' attendance by:
 - making clear to families the links between attendance and achievement
 - promoting and rewarding good attendance
 - eliminating the use of part-time timetables for pupils.

- Improve the quality of teaching and provision in the Reception class so that it is at least good and ensure that children's safety is given the highest priority.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders use their knowledge of strengths and weaknesses

- in teaching to prioritise training and support for teachers so that they all develop the skills that they need to be effective
- regularly producing a succinct analysis of the progress that different classes and groups are making in reading, writing and mathematics and ensuring that leaders and governors understand how this compares to achievement nationally
 - analysing information about behaviour incidents, exclusions, physical intervention and pupils' attendance so that patterns and trends are identified and variations for different groups are spotted so that appropriate action can be taken
 - ensuring that child protection concerns, and the actions taken by the school, are carefully documented and that staff follow the clear guidance in the school safeguarding policy about when referrals should be made to the local authority
 - ensuring that governors develop the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities and provide appropriate challenge and support to school leaders.

An external review of governance and a review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 15–16 March 2016

Evidence

HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the governing body and the local authority.

Context

Plans are well underway for Fairfield to join Hollymount School, a local academy, and convert to academy status in the near future.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher keeps a close eye on all aspects of school improvement. She is keenly focused on the priorities arising from the last section 5 inspection and has led a rigorous programme of professional development to equip staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to quickly bring about the necessary improvements. She has ensured that all initiatives to improve reading, writing and mathematics are backed up with high-quality training. She continually checks how well initiatives are implemented and swiftly identifies emerging priorities. The headteacher communicates her expectations clearly and, as a consequence, everyone understands what they must do. All staff know they are accountable for pupils' progress and outcomes.

The deputy headteacher has successfully led a programme of initiatives to improve pupils' behaviour. She keeps detailed records of behaviour incidents and analyses the information carefully to identify any patterns or emerging issues. She is quick to intervene and has established good relationships with parents to share understanding and practice. She seeks expertise from external agencies, such as behaviour support, learning support and education psychology, so that pupils receive pertinent individual help wherever necessary. She has arranged for the family support worker to run workshops for pupils and parents to help them understand their roles in improving behaviour and attitudes to learning. Exclusions and physical intervention are now rare and used only in response to an appropriately serious incident. Staff on duty at lunchtimes help pupils to use cutlery, share equipment, take turns and look out for each other.

Subject leaders have introduced new initiatives to help raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics. They considered suitable published schemes and approaches to best meet the pupils' needs. Leaders and governors have supported the initiatives by investing significantly in new, up-to-date resources and materials.

Subject leaders work hard to raise staff confidence in teaching reading, writing and mathematics. They provide training or master classes for other staff so their knowledge of a subject, teaching methods or use of resources, is relevant and meets pupils' current needs. Subject leaders regularly examine pupils' work, observe lessons and attend meetings to check on how well subjects are taught and track the rates of progress made by pupils. They know where problems exist and they are quick to suggest and check on improvements, and carefully chose published materials which would both support staff and inspire pupils. In addition, they have established creative approaches to learning, such as Marvellous Monday Maths and Friday Write to provide imaginative purposes for pupils to investigate, consider, solve problems and write from a range of stimuli. Pupils enjoy their visits to such places as Cadbury World, the Sea Life Centre, the Black Country Museum and Bishop's Wood. These experiences and visitors to school enrich pupils' experience and 'hook' them into learning. Pupils have a limited knowledge of other religions, beliefs, traditions and customs.

All leaders and teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and in considerable detail. They check each other's judgements and share and compare findings with staff from other schools. These steps ensure a consistent understanding of pupils' achievement and priorities for future learning.

The Chair of the Governing Body has continued to build on the successes established and reported at the previous monitoring inspection in November last year. Governors are well organised and work closely with leaders. Meetings are purposeful, well informed and focused on pupils' progress and outcomes. Governors have an accurate knowledge of pupils' predicted outcomes for future tests.

The headteacher provides informative, evaluative reports for governors but, in addition, they seek their own evidence and analyse information independently. They keep a close eye on how well the school is progressing against the school improvement plan.

All staff have completed 'Prevent' training. The safeguarding policy is up to date and all staff are aware of indications of harm and how to report concerns. Recruitment procedures are suitably detailed and up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers are increasingly confident and accurate in tracking pupils' progress. The school's system effectively highlights the age-related expectations in each subject and breaks down the steps towards the long-term goals. Teachers are able to track progress and plan the next steps. Lessons are planned sequentially to build on pupils' prior learning. Teachers share the learning purpose for each lesson and what the pupils must do to show their understanding. As a consequence, pupils are better able to understand what is expected of them.

Reading skills are taught systematically and regularly. Pupils are genuinely interested and pleased with their own development. Teachers and assistants write and pronounce letters and sounds clearly and they rightly expect precision from the pupils. Pupils identify and read common words and use their phonics knowledge to attempt unfamiliar words. Pupils increasingly recall these skills to spell accurately in their written work. Pupils' vocabulary is generally immature for their age but teachers are aware of the pupils' limitations and work hard to extend pupils' knowledge and use of words. Generally, pupils are making good progress from their very low starting points but remain below where they should be for their age.

Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 routinely correct their spelling errors. They try hard to present their work neatly and write for a range of purposes. Pupils have made good progress in describing settings and characters and are increasingly able to structure text accurately. They apply a range of punctuation and write in paragraphs. Pupils of all ages are given opportunities to respond to a range of stimuli such as film extracts or books. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the 'Friday Write' sessions, where a range of stimuli or unfamiliar objects, such as an organ pipe from Worcester cathedral, are used to inspire pupils' imaginative writing. Pupils are encouraged to consider and use an increasingly broad range of vocabulary.

The recently introduced mathematics scheme is successfully raising staff confidence in teaching the subject. Pupils appreciate the new mathematical equipment which helps them to present mathematical concepts in practical ways. This approach is helping them to develop and consolidate their understanding. Their pride in their achievement and increased confidence during lessons is evident. Pupils cover an appropriate range of work and their progress is speeding up. Nevertheless, pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are not yet working at the standard expected for their age, despite their accelerated rates of progress, because of the extensive gaps in their knowledge. The mathematics scheme will be extended to all year groups in the near future.

The headteacher has provided substantial training for teaching assistants. They now have a better understanding of their role and how they can support pupils' learning. Training has strengthened their subject knowledge and they now plan alongside teachers. An increasing proportion of teaching assistants are developing the necessary knowledge and skills to teach aspects of reading, writing and mathematics. Where teaching assistants are less effective in lessons, they fail to scan the pupils and intervene quickly when someone struggles or loses attention. Occasionally, when they support small groups of pupils they do not lead and model the subject-related vocabulary, ask questions to seek pupils' understanding or help to extend learning.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes settle to routines quickly. Children in the Nursery class have begun to reflect on their learning and discuss what they have done, what they might do next and who they would like to work with. Taught sessions are purposeful and have a clear learning focus. Taught sessions are well

planned and build on previous learning. Children respond with interest and concentration. They listen attentively and show their understanding by taking part in songs, recognise and name numbers and letters, and happily fulfil tasks. However, some activities occupy children rather than support, develop or consolidate their learning. A range of key weaknesses were identified on entry to the Reception class in September but they have not been addressed with sufficient ambition or urgency.

Much needs to be done to prepare the children adequately for Year 1.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour is improving over time. All adults share high expectations of all pupils. Rewards provide valued incentives for pupils and reasons for sanctions are well known. Pupils' behaviour has improved in lessons. They are increasingly able to persevere with tasks without losing concentration or showing dependence on adults. Pupils are beginning to see improvements in their work and they now appreciate that their effort is worthwhile.

In a meeting with Year 6 pupils, they explained that the school was safe now because pupils behave. They appreciate the new resources to occupy them during breaktimes and lunchtimes. They agreed that silliness is rare and that adults are quick to intervene if they see pupils getting overexcited. Nevertheless, the behaviour log records a number of incidents, usually towards the end of breaktimes where individuals are less able to manage their own behaviour or emotions. These pupils are well known to staff and receive a range of specific support to help reduce incidents.

Pupils know about different types of bullying but report that they are unaware of it occurring in school. They were able to confidently explain bullying that can occur in social media and internet sites and what to do if it occurred.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and appreciate the imaginative approaches to inspire them to write. They appreciate the new resources for mathematics because they help them to picture and understand difficult concepts. They were insistent that if they struggled teachers helped.

At the end of the school year in 2015 attendance remained well below the national average for the second year. Since September last year, attendance has improved and current data are much closer to national figures. The deputy headteacher closely monitors attendance and punctuality. She is quick to identify patterns and problems and loses no time in contacting parents to agree solutions for improvement. She has introduced a range of rewards for perfect or good attendance and these include weekly punctuality and early bird certificates. The Nursery teacher has recently introduced 'super trooper awards' to encourage attendance from an early age. All leaders make clear links between attendance and

pupils' progress so that parents are fully aware of the impact of poor attendance on their children's learning.

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 November last year.

At the end of the Reception Year less than half of the children achieved a good level of development. This outcome is considerably lower than the national average for 2015. Particular weaknesses were evident in reading and writing. Boys developed less well than girls in reading, writing, shape, space and measure and also demonstrated weaknesses in all aspects of personal, social and emotional development. Disadvantaged children did less well than other children nationally but better than their classmates in the school.

The school's records and pupils' work provide clear evidence of pupils' progress over time in reading, writing and mathematics. In some year groups the rate of progress is impressive. The school has adopted a detailed system to track pupils' progress and compare outcomes with national age-related expectations. Leaders check and record pupils' progress every half term. Significant gaps remain between the standards pupils are working at and those expected for their age. In at least one year group, pupils are working at a year below age-related expectations. Improvements in pupils' reading, writing and calculation skills are evident but gaps in their knowledge and skills remain. Teachers are constantly 'playing catch up' for the extensive and prolonged weak teaching in the past.

External support

The local authority has commissioned Babcock International to fulfil school improvement functions in the future. The school improvement adviser knows the school well and has contributed significantly to staff training and development. The support will reduce after the Easter break.