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Marie-Claire Bretherton
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Dear Mrs Bretherton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Benjamin Adlard Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22–23 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 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 copying this letter to the Chair of the Rapid Improvement Board, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Duignan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2014.

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 3 to 6, so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do, especially the most-able pupils
 - all teachers regularly checking throughout their lessons that different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are making sufficient progress and, if necessary, adapting the tasks given
 - providing pupils with focused guidance in marking on how to improve the quality of their work.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - resolving the issue of the permanent leadership of the academy and distributing leadership responsibilities more evenly throughout the staff
 - developing the support and challenge roles of the members of the Rapid Improvement Board who are not members of the academy's staff
 - making sure information about pupils' achievement is accurate and the systems for tracking progress are efficient
 - ensuring that leaders check more often that pupils' work is of a high quality and provide teachers with written feedback to help them improve their teaching
 - helping subject leaders to make an effective contribution to improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement.

- Improve achievement in writing and mathematics by:
 - improving pupils' grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting skills
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects
 - developing pupils' calculation skills, including their knowledge of multiplication facts
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to use and apply numeracy skills in different contexts, including problem-solving.

- An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of pupil premium funding, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 22 to 23 March 2016

Evidence

During my inspection, I met with you, the head of school and other senior leaders, subject and phase leaders, a member of the governing body and a representative from the academy's sponsor, the CfBT Schools Trust. I spoke formally with pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 and informally with others at break and lunchtimes. I reviewed a range of documentation, including: the school's development plan; self-evaluation documents; records of monitoring and evaluation; performance management information; behaviour records; minutes of the rapid improvement board, and information about the attainment and progress of pupils across the school. I observed learning in a range of classes; some were observed jointly with the executive headteacher and the head of school. Together with the head of school, I looked at the quality of work in pupils' books.

Context

One member of staff remains on long-term absence. One permanent teacher has been appointed and will take up post after Easter.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The improvements brought about by the executive headteacher and the head of school are continuing to have a positive impact on raising the quality of teaching. The teacher tracker ensures that a close focus is maintained on the quality of teaching across the school and ensures that the right support is put in place to help teachers improve. Teachers have benefited from opportunities to observe each other, and the triad system is working effectively to help teachers reflect on and improve their classroom teaching. This openness to support is something of a culture change for teachers who were previously unwilling to seek out support.

The targets set for teachers link strategically to the whole-school development plan. This, coupled with a renewed sense of common purpose, means that all staff have a keen understanding of their role in driving improvement and share a commitment to do so. This finding was echoed by the governor I spoke to, who told me that 'previously staff were very fragmented. Now, they all know why they're here.'

Subject and phase leaders are increasingly effective in their roles. They have taken responsibility for tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils in the areas they lead and, as a result, are now able to pinpoint the precise aspects that need further development. The impact of their work can now be seen, for example, in pupils' improved calculation skills across the curriculum and in the support that these leaders have given to help other teachers improve their practice.

There is now better coordination and monitoring of the provision for pupils with special educational needs and disability. This has resulted in better understanding of where exactly these pupils are making good progress and where more needs to be done to speed up their progress. The school has now appointed a leader to monitor and raise the achievement of the increasing proportion of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. This will be looked at in more detail at the next visit.

Parents play an increasingly important role in the life of the school. The very well-attended and well-received art exhibition in Year 4 was evidence of their increasing appreciation of the improvements being made. As one commented, 'It is so lovely to be invited in to see how much the teachers put in to making learning fun, and how much they care about each and every child.' Another wrote to thank you for this 'privileged opportunity to join in these special moments'.

Pride in the school is evident in the imaginative and high-quality work on display, much of which pupils have produced at home for their home learning projects. Teachers and teaching assistants have worked hard to create imaginative reading corners. Pupils enjoy opportunities to escape with a book into the 'castle' and the 'deep blue sea'. These opportunities are firing their imaginations and re-igniting their love for learning.

You continue to take your safeguarding responsibilities seriously, having a keen understanding of the risks that some of these pupils are vulnerable to in their communities and their home lives. Since my previous visit you have made further improvements to the school site. During the inspection, older pupils were engaged in a workshop led by an outside agency on the importance of safe relationships. This is an important part of the preparation for the next stage of their education.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching continues to improve. In the majority of lessons visited, teachers and teaching assistants showed confidence and skill in using questioning to gauge the progress that pupils were making, and in adapting learning where necessary. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on calculating measurements, the teacher successfully built on the measuring skills pupils had developed and challenged them to solve problems involving measurements. Each group in the class was carefully supported by the adults in the classroom, who intervened to provide additional support or challenge where necessary. In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher quickly realised that some pupils were struggling with the more challenging tasks they had been set on calculating angles. Careful explanations and modelling of the problem soon set them back on track.

Expectations of what pupils can achieve continue to grow. During the inspection there were several examples of the most-able pupils in particular being stretched and challenged by the work they were given. The school's emphasis on building

resilience is successfully teaching these pupils the skills and attitudes they need to work through problems. There are now more opportunities for pupils to use their writing and calculation skills in a range of subjects. Not all pupils use their abilities to their full extent in other subjects, however, and there is more to do to ensure that the most-able pupils, from the youngest class upwards, are consistently challenged by the tasks they are set.

The consistency of marking and feedback has further improved since the last monitoring visit. Older pupils told the inspector how much the use of 'purple pens' is helping them to improve their work, and this was borne out by the joint scrutiny of their books.

Effective working between teachers and teaching assistants is becoming more consistent. The school employs parent helpers in some classes and teachers ensure they are well supported to assist effectively in pupils' learning. Groups regularly swap around, so that all have equal access to the different support on offer.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The 'golden rules' continue to have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour around school and in class. Pupils agree that these have been instrumental in improving their behaviour. They told me that they now understand the consequences of their actions more clearly, because teachers apply the sanctions more consistently: there are no more 'empty threats'. They greatly appreciate the opportunities they get during 'golden time' to practise art, drama, music, sport and other activities. The greater range of clubs now on offer are well attended by all groups of pupils, and are contributing to the renewed sense of pride in the school that is shared by pupils and their parents. Their courtesy and friendly welcome to visitors are a credit to the work leaders and staff have done to emphasise the importance of good manners and of being good ambassadors for their school.

Records show a reduction in the number of incidents for which 'red forms' are awarded. While some pupils struggle to comply with school rules and the expected behaviours, the well-coordinated support they receive from pastoral staff, teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies has a positive impact on improving their behaviour. Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Actions to improve the attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent from school are having a positive impact. Leaders do not shy away from taking tough action with those parents who do not respond to reminders about good attendance.

The presentation of pupils' work continues to improve. From the youngest class upwards, pupils take increasing care of their books and make every effort to present their work neatly.

Unfailingly, pupils express their absolute confidence in the school's leaders, teachers and support staff to keep them safe. As one put it, 'Teachers have helped me to understand bad influences better, and now I know how to stay safe.'

Outcomes for pupils

Information provided by the school, scrutiny of pupils' books and observations of teaching show that in most classes, most pupils are making the expected rates of progress and some have made accelerated progress. While there is some way to go to ensure that all pupils attain in line with others nationally, a greater proportion of pupils are now meeting age-related expectations in a range of subjects. In Year 1 for example, pupils have made rapid progress as a result of carefully targeted teaching and effective support for those pupils who did not achieve a good level of development at the end of early years. Current data shows that almost all these pupils have made more than the expected progress since the start of the year, particularly in reading, where a far higher proportion are now reaching the expected standard.

Predicted outcomes for the Year 6 pupils have undergone some adjustment, as some pupils have left the class and others have joined part way through the year. Current information suggests that the vast majority are making at least expected progress in reading and mathematics. There is more to do to fully develop the writing skills of those pupils who have missed significant amounts of schooling and those who have joined part way through the year.

For some pupils, and in some classes, rates of progress are variable. In Year 3 for example, staff absence and the lack of a permanent teacher have led to slower rates of progress, particularly in reading and writing. In this class, the proportion who are meeting age-related expectations is not rising quickly enough. Members of the school's leadership team have now taken responsibility for this class and, as a result, pupils are now making better progress, but they have a long way to go to catch up. A permanent teacher will take over this class after Easter.

The pupil premium leader has undertaken a careful analysis of the achievement of these pupils across all classes. Having identified areas where they were not receiving the necessary support, she took action to remedy this. These pupils are now making better progress, and in some areas they outperform their peers.

Pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling, although improving, remain an area for further development. This is particularly the case in the older classes, where pupils have much lost ground to make up. Leaders and teachers are committed to doing all they can to get these pupils up to the necessary standard before they move on to secondary school.

External support

You continue to receive effective support from the Kyra Teaching School Alliance. This has included, for example, coaching and mentoring for middle leaders to help them become more effective in their roles. The Trust has continued to keep a close check on the progress the school is making, both through their presence on the rapid improvement board and their visits to the school.