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Mr Matthew Wynne
Headteacher
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Oxford
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Dear Mr Wynne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Windale Community Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 3–4 February 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the academy 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2015

Improve teaching so that it is always good by making sure that:

- expectations of what pupils can achieve are raised and work set is more challenging to help them make faster progress
- pupils are given work that motivates them to learn well and make good progress
- pupils have time to respond to marking and improve or finish their work, so that they are helped to make better progress.

Improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:

- leaders, including trustees, regularly make sure that all agreed actions are having the required impact on the achievement of different groups of pupils, on improving the quality of teaching and on pupils' behaviour
- trustees use their skills to challenge school leaders effectively and to hold the school to account for improving standards
- assessment information about pupils' different starting points and the progress they have made are used by all teachers and teaching assistants to plan pupils' learning across the school, including in the early years
- training and development are given to new and existing subject leaders so that they secure good-quality teaching and pupil achievement in their areas of responsibility.

Increase achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:

- ensuring that there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) throughout the school, including in the early years
- checking frequently that pupils understand key mathematical operations and that they build on their knowledge and skills to make more rapid progress
- ensuring that pupils are taught the basic skills of English grammar, punctuation and spelling to improve their writing skills
- making sure that pupils are provided with planned opportunities to practise and use their basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics across all subjects.

Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by ensuring that the school's behaviour management policies and practices are consistently applied and have a positive impact on improving pupils' behaviour.

An external review of governance and 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 3–4 February 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised documents relating to improvement, pupils' progress and safety, along with the academy's own monitoring and evaluation. Inspectors met with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, the senior leadership team, the literacy subject leader, a group of pupils from Years 3 to 6, a group of staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), who is also a trustee, and another trustee, a representative from the organisation supporting the academy with numeracy, which is also one of the academy's sponsors. Informal meetings were also held with parents. Inspectors made short visits to classrooms accompanied by the special educational needs coordinator to observe how pupils with additional needs are supported. Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment in all year groups, during which they also scrutinised pupils' work in books.

Context

The senior assistant headteacher is now the special educational needs coordinator and based full time in the academy.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has now been in post one term. By working effectively with the senior leadership team and the IEB, he has resolutely and systematically ensured that many of the changes planned when he first took up his post have been successfully actioned. This has led to significant improvements in pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching. Most notably, pupils reported to inspectors that the academy provides them with an environment where their talents are now nurtured, where they feel safer, and where they know more clearly what they have to do to succeed. The majority of parents recognised and welcomed these improvements.

IEB members now meet more regularly and more rigorously hold the academy's leaders to account for the pace of change. Clear lines of accountability have now been established between the IEB and the trustees. This clarity has led to a greater degree of challenge for the academy's leaders from IEB members, including the trustees who sit on the IEB. Following their checks, IEB members have astutely identified areas where improvement is not as rapid as it is in other areas. The IEB follows this up by requiring the situation to be rectified. This helps leaders to prioritise their actions better. Where necessary, IEB members challenge trustees to provide additional resources, for example, funding a supplementary mathematics teacher to work with Years 3 and 4.

Strengths in the academy's approach to secure improvements:

- The headteacher has successfully developed the improvement plans so that they clearly detail when key actions will take place, who is responsible for implementing them, and what the anticipated impact will be on pupils' outcomes. Consequently, senior leaders are now much clearer about what they are aiming for in the short term. These plans link well with established longer term plans.
- Leaders focus more sharply on improving the areas for which they are accountable. This is because each member of the senior team now has a narrower portfolio of responsibilities. As a result, a significant number of changes have been made and evaluated since the previous monitoring visit. These changes have had a tangibly positive impact on the academy, which now runs as a 'tight ship'.
- Following training delivered by the special educational needs coordinator, assistants now make a much better contribution to the academy by supporting pupils more effectively out of lessons on bespoke programmes. They are also much clearer about what their support role entails when they are in class.
- A senior leader is now responsible for improving behaviour and teachers now manage low-level disruption better. This has led to improvements in pupils' behaviour, and pupils' ability to discipline themselves. It has also enabled better learning. Newly implemented methods for monitoring the occurrence and types of disruption have enabled the senior leader to deploy support for pupils and staff more effectively.
- The headteacher, together with other senior leaders, has strengthened the way judgements about the quality of teaching are made. The headteacher rightly places significant emphasis, when evaluating teaching, on the progress pupils make. Each teacher has an individual plan of support which includes tailor-made targets. This helps teachers to develop their practice further whatever their current capabilities are. This approach has led to improvements in teaching in some, but not as yet all, year groups.
- Senior leaders have made well-planned changes to the way the curriculum is organised. Now different classes follow different themes when learning subjects other than literacy and numeracy, such as history. Teachers choose the themes and the tasks based on them very carefully so that pupils have opportunities to build on their learning in numeracy and literacy. In some but not all classes, this sharper learning focus and better links with the acquisition of the key skills needed help pupils make progress in literacy and numeracy.
- The early years leader has rightly ensured that all teaching assistants are trained in phonics (the sounds that letters make). She monitors small-group phonics sessions effectively to ensure that assistants employ this training well. Where necessary, she uses her specialist knowledge to recommend better ways for assistants to deliver the sessions. This has led to greater consistency and a greater proportion of children developing early reading skills.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Subject leaders do not monitor the impact of new, agreed approaches with sufficient rigour or regularity. This area of the academy's leadership is less developed than others and is currently holding the academy back in the next phase of its development.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs, and boys, especially but not solely, in writing, has not improved rapidly enough.
- Phase leaders' improvements to lessons based on themes have not yet had enough impact on closing gaps in attainment in literacy and numeracy for boys, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs in all classes.
- Early years leaders have not yet placed enough focus on ensuring play activities in the setting develop children's communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Consequently, these activities do not always make enough contribution to closing gaps in achievement between different groups of children in these key areas of learning.
- Leaders have not worked with a sufficiently wide group of partner schools to ensure their assessments of pupils' work against age-related expectations are as reliable as possible.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving, although some pockets of weaker teaching remain in the early years setting and in Key Stages 1 and 2. Teaching in numeracy, writing and 'topic' has improved since the previous monitoring inspection. However, in some classes, teachers do not adopt agreed new approaches with sufficient confidence and expertise. Subject leadership in English and numeracy is being developed but has not moved as far along as other areas of the academy. This means that in some classes, new approaches to improve the way subject content is taught are not being monitored rigorously enough. There are good plans in place to improve this.

The teaching of writing is now more consistent. The subject leader for English has rightly introduced an academy-wide approach. The subject leader has sensibly made it very clear that this approach should be tailored to the needs of the class and the type of writing being undertaken. In some classes, teachers are doing this well. For example, in a Year 2 class, this approach helped pupils start their written instructions on how to build an igloo in an appropriate and engaging manner. However, in a number of other classes, noticeably but not solely in Key Stage 1, teachers do not adapt their approaches to teaching and assessing writing effectively enough. As a result, some pupils do not understand which is the best language to use to capture the interest of the audience, nor how to ensure their writing makes sense. As a result, in a number of classes the proportion of pupils meeting age-related expectations in writing is lower than in reading or numeracy.

The teaching of numeracy has improved and teachers have benefited from their work with external consultants. Teachers ensure that pupils are challenged more by outlining a hierarchy of challenges at the start of the lesson. In the majority of classes observed by inspectors, pupils selected the appropriate challenge for their ability. Teachers make good use of additional practical resources to help pupils access the hardest challenges. For example, in Year 6, the teacher used large cut-out shapes to demonstrate to pupils how by manipulating these shapes on a large piece of graph paper they could gain a better grasp of coordinates and mathematical translation. This led to better progress. However, in some classes, pupils have not developed the skills to select the right challenge. This means that they find the work either too easy or far too hard and do not learn as much from the work they complete. In some classes, teachers are not clear enough about how best to support pupils in completing the challenging tasks they have chosen. Consequently, pupils' progress slows.

There is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years setting. Some teachers do not ensure that play activities are targeted to develop children's skills. For example, in Reception, in one class the boys were playing in an unfocused way, spurning water, while a group of girls were sitting quietly reading picture books. The teacher did not ensure that all the children in the class were directed to activities that would most support them in acquiring skills in the areas of learning in which they were weaker. Coupled with this, the role that the teaching assistants played in developing children's learning as they played was not being monitored closely enough. Last year, there was a gap between boys' and girls' achievement in literacy in early years. Although better phonics teaching is now helping to close this gap, undirected and unstructured play activities are not.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour is noticeably better than in the past. This is due to improvements in the way teachers manage low-level disruption, especially through the use of sanctions and rewards. In the majority of classes, teachers apply the behaviour sanctions and rewards effectively and the atmosphere in these classes is now calmer and more purposeful. Pupils with additional needs are now better supported. This means that they do not distract other pupils from their learning as much. Pupils with additional needs are also provided with specially designed programmes that provide them with coping strategies to use when they are in lessons. Some, but not all, pupils with additional needs are using these strategies to stay better focused in lessons.

A number of teachers, when planning lessons, have sensibly started to include approaches designed to reduce opportunities for pupils to disrupt learning. For example, in the Year 6 topic lesson, the teacher paused a well-chosen film clip every two minutes and instructed pupils to discuss the areas he had asked them to focus on. This process of identifying a focus, pausing and feeding back meant that pupils were fully engaged in watching the clip, and their behaviour was very positive. However, in some cases teachers do not predict well enough how planned

activities will play out in the classroom. They do not always ensure that they have effective approaches to pre-empt any disruption. When this happens, pupils do not listen well, and they fidget and start to talk while the teacher talks. Their progress slows as a consequence.

Attendance has improved and so has punctuality. The approach of rewarding punctual classes has paid off well. However, pupils' attendance in Reception is lower than in other year groups and this is having a negative impact on the overall attendance figures for the academy. The early years leader is working closely with parents to improve this.

Outcomes for pupils

Published information from last year's assessments and examinations indicates that in 2015, pupils' attainment was significantly below average in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and numeracy. It was particularly weak in writing. In Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 and above was in line with national figures except in English grammar, punctuation and spelling, where it was significantly below. This was an improvement from 2014, when attainment was significantly lower than average in all subjects.

In 2015, pupils who had very low starting points made progress in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they did not make the very rapid progress they needed to in order to catch up and meet national expectations of attainment. Consequently, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above in writing, and the proportion of pupils not eligible for additional funding reaching Level 5 in numeracy were significantly below average. In English grammar, punctuation and spelling, pupils' attainment was significantly below average and particularly weak. Improving pupils' writing in terms of style, content and accuracy remains a priority for further development.

Published figures show that disadvantaged pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2 was much lower than that of others nationally and lower than that of other pupils in the academy. Closing this gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers remains a key focus for the academy's leaders. They are rightly ensuring that disadvantaged pupils receive the additional help they need to meet their end-of-year targets. Despite this, the academy's own information shows that, although there have been some improvements, disadvantaged pupils are currently not achieving as well as others in the academy in some year groups. The widest gap is in year groups where there is a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils, such as in Year 6.

The academy has moved to a new way of tracking pupils' in-year attainment. It is now measured in terms of whether pupils are meeting age-related expectations. The academy is working with the two other academies in the multi-academy trust (MAT) to ensure that their judgements as to what constitutes age-related expectations are accurate. However, the academy's leaders have not yet worked with good or better schools beyond the MAT to check whether their judgements are accurate. The information collected by the academy indicates that between

November 2015 and January 2016, there was a substantial increase in the proportion of pupils in Year 6 meeting age-related expectations in reading, writing and numeracy. According to the academy's own information, pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, generally do not achieve as well in writing as in other subjects. This is notable in Key Stage 1, and younger Key Stage 2 classes.

In 2015, according to the school's information, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of their early years education increased compared with the previous year but remained below average. In 2015, there was a gap in the proportion of boys reaching this threshold when compared with girls. There was also a gap between the proportion of disadvantaged children reaching this goal when compared with others in the setting. Current information based on assessments indicates that the gap between the proportion of disadvantaged children reaching a good level of development and others is narrowing well. The gap between boys and girls is not narrowing as rapidly.

External support

The headteacher has monitored the quality and impact of the external support provided and on occasion sensibly asked for changes to be made so that it is better tailored to the academy's changing needs. External support from one of the academy's sponsors is helping to improve the way numeracy is taught across the academy. The literacy leader has also benefited from external training in teaching writing. The external support provided in both cases is not yet making a big enough difference across all year groups. This is because subject leaders are not playing a great enough role in monitoring its impact and then following up their checks with additional training, as required. The support in the early years from local authority representatives has been well focused on ensuring that teaching assistants are trained in phonics. However, some assistants have not yet been trained in how to support children in acquiring new understanding, knowledge and skills through their play. The local authority representative, working alongside the early years leader, has made plans to rectify this. It is important that these plans are implemented as soon as possible.