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5 July 2016

Mrs A Cliff  
Executive Headteacher  
Hill Avenue Primary School  
Hill Avenue  
Lanesfield  
Wolverhampton  
WV4 6PY

Dear Mrs Cliff

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Hill Avenue Primary School**

Following my visit with Catherine Draper, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 21–22 June 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 February 2015. 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:

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 interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Wolverhampton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that inadequate teaching is quickly eradicated and all teaching is at least consistently good in all subjects by making sure that:
  - teachers know how to assess accurately what pupils already know
  - teachers use their assessments to plan work that will build on what pupils can do to deepen their understanding further
  - teachers use their assessments to fill gaps in learning which have resulted from previously inadequate teaching
  - the teaching of phonics in the early years is consistent in its organisation and effectiveness and that older pupils are encouraged to use their phonics skills when trying to read unfamiliar words
  - pupils solve problems for themselves and are able to use the information that is available to them more readily, rather than relying on other adults for help
  - teachers' subject knowledge of mathematics is developed further.
  
- Secure further improvements to leadership and management of the school by making sure that:
  - all leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and have high enough expectations so that improvements are driven quickly
  - the checks on learning in books and in classrooms, which have been recently introduced, continue and clear targets are set for teachers which become a focus for future checks on their work
  - action is taken to check rigorously on pupils' attendance and follow up any concerns.
  
- Significantly improve governance by taking immediate action to:
  - make sure that all governors have the necessary skills to enable them to use and challenge the information that is given to them so that leaders are held to account
  - carry out a review of how well the school keeps pupils healthy and safe while on the school site and take immediate action to address any concerns raised, such as improving lunchtime supervision and staff training
  - address all improvement areas previously identified by the reviews of governance and the use of pupil premium with a greater sense of urgency.
  
- Make arrangements for pupils in Nursery and Reception to have access to suitable space for outdoor play to allow them to practise activities such as balancing, climbing, racing and chasing games so that their physical development is not constrained.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 21–22 June 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other leaders and staff, three members of the interim executive board (IEB) including the chair of the IEB, and two representatives of the local authority.

During the inspection, 34 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 32 responses to the school's parental questionnaire were considered. Parents, pupils and staff were spoken to on an informal basis and pupils' work was reviewed. The lead inspector made short visits to every class with senior leaders and the team inspector spent most of the first day in the early years setting. The school's information about pupils' progress, behaviour, safety and attendance was analysed and the minutes of meetings of the IEB were also scrutinised.

### **Context**

Two new higher-level teaching assistants, a teaching assistant, three play leaders and a part-time early years teacher have joined the school since the last monitoring inspection. A teacher from the school is now the special educational needs coordinator and the teacher who was appointed to start this term did not join the school. A teacher from the Manor Teaching School Alliance is currently filling this vacancy and two new teachers are due to start at the school in September 2016. One member of the IEB resigned and two new board members were appointed in April 2016.

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

The ambitious culture created by senior leaders is having a positive impact on the quality of education provided by the school. Actions have been taken to address all the areas for improvement identified in February 2015. As referred to in the last monitoring letter, leaders have eradicated a number of the weaknesses, and effective strategies are firmly embedded in order to improve the school further.

The executive headteacher, the head of school, the deputy headteacher and the lead practitioner have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have used this to inform their accurate self-evaluation and school improvement planning. They are taking effective action to make improvements.

The quality of teaching continues to improve and pupils throughout the school are making faster progress than they were at the time of the last monitoring inspection. As a result, school leaders are confidently predicting greatly improved outcomes this year.

Effective performance management and targeted professional development are leading to better teaching and improved progress. For example, staff have been coached and given targeted training opportunities to improve their practice, and this has led to more consistently good teaching in key stages 1 and 2. As a result of continuing professional development opportunities, the improvements in the quality of teaching in mathematics, which were seen during the last visit, have been built on.

Staff with specific responsibilities are now playing a more active role in checking learning and progress in their particular areas. This is supporting further improvements across the school. However, as some of these leaders are relatively new to post and some systems that have been introduced are not yet fully embedded, their impact cannot be fully evaluated.

Parents are increasingly supportive of the school. They are invited into special assemblies and activities designed to help their children with their learning. The parent-teacher association has organised a summer fayre and it has its own section on the website. School leaders have ensured that developments are communicated effectively through the school's website and regular newsletters, and parents are encouraged to make their views known through Parent View. Responses on Parent View are beginning to reflect the improvements made in the school since the last full inspection, and the school's own questionnaire returns indicate that the vast majority of parents think that the school is well led and managed. The school meets requirements for the publication of specified information on its website.

School leaders have developed a culture for keeping children safe and the arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks have taken place on newly appointed staff and they have been given up-to-date safeguarding training as part of their induction process. All staff have also been given the most recent safeguarding information.

The effectiveness of the IEB has improved since the time of the last monitoring inspection. The composition of the IEB has been reviewed and changed in order to ensure that members have the skills, understanding and commitment to offer appropriate support and challenge. Members of the board now have a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses as they visit the school more frequently, undertake learning walks and receive comprehensive reports from school leaders and the local authority. They challenge this information through incisive questions and use it to ensure that leaders take further action to improve the school.

Meetings of the IEB, which have had full attendance since the membership was revised, focus on improving the quality of education in the school. Minutes of the IEB's meetings indicate that the IEB considers all aspects of the school's provision including pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, safeguarding, behaviour and the impact of leadership and management at all levels. The IEB has also received high-quality finance reports and ensure that school funding is used appropriately.

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

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has continued to improve. Almost all staff are now planning for what they want pupils to learn rather than what they want them to do. Teachers are also using the assessment information that is available to them more consistently in order to devise learning opportunities which challenge pupils of different abilities. The most able are given work which stretches them and pupils who have special educational needs or disability are usually well supported.

Staff give pupils more opportunities to discuss their work with each other and pupils are taking more responsibility for their own progress. For example, self-assessment and peer assessment are used well and, where teaching is most effective, pupils are actively encouraged to learn from their mistakes. Pupils understand what is expected of them and use clear lists of what they have to do to produce their best work to improve their own work and that of their classmates. This, along with a clear focus on developing skills and probing questions by staff, has led to improved progress, particularly in mathematics.

All staff are now following the school's marking policy and make positive comments about pupils' work. Where feedback is most effective, pupils are clear about how to improve their work. However, feedback still varies in quality and a few teachers do not always insist on good presentation.

Although improving, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain. In the lessons observed during this inspection, there were missed opportunities for pupils to model answers and explain their ideas fully. It is also evident that some teachers are not yet giving pupils strategies to develop the skills or the confidence to work things out for themselves without reassurance from members of staff.

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

Most pupils behave well in class and around the school. Pupils adopt safe practices and they conduct themselves sensibly. They have been taught how to be successful learners, and staff and pupils enjoy positive relationships. All teachers are now using these relationships more effectively to improve progress.

There are few incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions are rare. Staff use a range of internal and external support mechanisms to help pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Concerns raised by parents are followed up thoroughly. Very few incidents of bullying occur but the system of recording and monitoring patterns of behaviour are not as sophisticated as other processes within the school. Leaders have plans to record incidents in more detail so they can analyse the type of behaviour, time of occurrence and the characteristics of the pupils involved. They propose to use this information to inform further action.

Attendance and punctuality have improved since the last monitoring inspection. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly but the school's overall attendance figure is still below the national average. School leaders are raising the awareness of the importance of regular attendance with parents, in particular, in order to improve this further.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school's internal information and work seen in books indicate that pupils' progress continues to improve across the school. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the progress of all groups in every school year and they take swift action to promote rapid progress if it slows.

Almost all groups of pupils in every year group are making improved progress. As a result of targeted intervention, better teaching and increased parental support, pupils in Year 6 have made particularly rapid progress since the last monitoring inspection. Progress in Years 2 and 4 has also accelerated throughout the year.

Achievement information, which has been moderated within the school, with the Manor Teaching School Alliance and by the local authority indicates that the school will achieve greatly improved outcomes in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. Progress in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics, is improving across the school.

### **Early years provision**

Moderated outcomes in the early years indicate that the progress of children has improved and that a higher proportion will reach the standards expected of them by the end of the Reception Year. A large majority will have the skills, knowledge and understanding to learn effectively in Year 1.

Children use their knowledge of phonics, the sounds that letters represent, to improve their reading and writing. An increasing number write appropriately, using finger spaces and capital letters. Their achievements are celebrated and parents are very positive about communication with the school and the progress their children are making.

However, the quality of teaching and the rates of progress in the early years setting have not improved as quickly as elsewhere in the school. At times, children are not full participants in their learning, and they are unable to understand the purpose of activities or the written feedback that they are given. This means that they are unclear about what they are learning and what they need to do to improve.

Pencil grips and letter formation are inconsistent and at times, when children are able to write independently, writing is copied so children do not progress as quickly as they are able. Leaders are also aware that children need more opportunities for exploration, creativity, use of imagination, thinking and reasoning.

Learning journeys, which do not contain the views of parents and children, do not always reflect the assessment of skills and next steps linked to ages and stages. The recording of progress is improving in the early years setting but it is not as systematic as elsewhere in the school.

### **External support**

The school continues to receive high-quality support from the Manor Teaching School Alliance. This includes intensive support in the early years setting, leadership support and opportunities to further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, as teaching continues to improve and as the leadership capacity at Hill Avenue Primary School continues to grow, the amount of support required has decreased.

The local authority has maintained its effective support. The link officer knows the school well and the termly reviews, which take place with staff from the school, continue to support school improvement well. A local authority officer has also conducted a safeguarding audit since the last monitoring inspection. School leaders value this as it validated their good practice.