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14 July 2016

Ms Jane Cartlidge  
Headteacher  
Southfield Primary Academy  
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Northamptonshire  
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Dear Ms Cartlidge

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Southfield Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Sue Wood, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 29–30 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 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.**

Having considered all the evidence I recommend that the school may seek to appoint only one newly qualified teacher.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve teaching to good by:
  - ensuring that tasks match the learning needs of pupils more accurately, including those of the most-able, disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs
  - raising teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work and their progress
  - increasing the provision for computing to benefit pupils' learning
  - making better use of questions to probe pupils' understanding and to extend their learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - developing the roles of senior and middle leaders so that they are more effective in identifying and targeting areas for improvement in teaching and learning, and acting upon these
  - developing the knowledge and skills of governors, so that they sufficiently hold the academy to account
  - improving the leadership and provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Improve pupils' achievement by:
  - ensuring that the most capable pupils reach higher standards in reading and writing
  - accelerating the progress of pupils who are disabled and who have special educational needs
  - meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils more effectively so that the gap between their achievement and others closes in the academy.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the academy'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 fourth monitoring inspection on 29 June 2016 to 30 June 2016**

### **Evidence**

During this monitoring inspection, inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, two groups of subject leaders and a further short meeting was held with the assessment leader designate who will assume responsibility for this role in September 2016. An inspector also met with the chair of the governing body and the external consultant who is supporting the school. An inspector met with a group of pupils and listened to them read. Inspectors considered the 77 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in visits to 15 lessons, scrutinised their work in lessons and reviewed separately pupils' work in a book scrutiny in mathematics, English and a wide variety of other subjects. The single central register was checked.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, four full-time teachers and one part-time teacher have resigned. Two current teachers are increasing their part-time posts from two days to four days per week. Among those who are leaving, one is the early years leader and one is the upper key stage 2 leader. Two full-time teachers and three further part-time teachers will be joining the school in September 2016. The early years leader's role and the key stage 2 leader's role will be taken up by current teachers in school. A member of the governing body has left.

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

The headteacher demonstrates resilience and commitment in addressing the areas for improvement from the section 5 inspection. As a result, attainment gaps are narrowing and the quality of teaching is improving.

The headteacher uses a range of evidence by which to judge the quality of teaching. Senior leaders monitor the quality of work in pupils' books, observe teachers in the classroom and evaluate the school's assessment information carefully. Leaders take immediate action when their evaluation of pupils' achievement highlights areas of weakness in pupils' learning and progress. The headteacher plans professional development support for individual teachers in order to address areas of weakness in their practice. This has been more successful in some cases than others. However, the quality of teaching is now much more consistent and inadequate teaching has been fully eradicated. The headteacher is resolute in her work to ensure the quality of teaching continues to improve rapidly.

Senior leaders track the progress of pupils more closely; phase leaders for the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 follow up poor progress in meetings with teachers and challenge underperformance in pupils' outcomes. School assessment

information shows that the attainment and progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is still inconsistent across year groups but is improving. Since the last monitoring inspection, the actions leaders have taken have narrowed attainment gaps, particularly in key stage 2, and the rates at which pupils are learning new concepts have increased quickly.

The school's subject leaders, including those for reading, writing and mathematics, check the quality of learning in their subjects. They do this through checking pupils' work in their books and using the school's assessment information to identify areas of strength and weakness. The school's external consultant supports subject leaders to better understand how to challenge colleagues to improve their work. While leaders for English and mathematics have some understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects, this is not fully the case for other subject leaders. This aspect of the school's leadership is in the early stages of development. Subject leaders in any subject do not have a fully developed understanding of the effectiveness of teaching. Neither do they have a well-rounded knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas. This limits their effectiveness in bringing about the necessary improvements quickly. As a result, plans for improvement do not identify precisely what leaders will do to improve their subjects. Neither do they quantify exactly what proportion of pupils will achieve more as a consequence of their actions.

School leaders have developed the school's website since the last inspection. The information on the site complies with the statutory requirement for schools. During the inspection, some parents commented that they would like to see a greater depth of information about what their children would be learning in different subjects. The majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire and those spoken with during the inspection expressed confidence in the school's leadership. The headteacher has further developed communication with parents through the establishment of a parents' forum. This has proved effective in providing parents with an opportunity to contribute and shape aspects of the school's life.

The governing body remains fully behind the headteacher and her staff. It provides valuable and incisive challenge to school leaders. Governors demonstrate their commitment to raising standards and improving education through their many visits to the school. Governors have a sound understanding of the quality of learning and progress and where teaching is most effective. Governors understand that further work is needed to ensure the roles of middle leaders are better developed. Along with the headteacher, plans are in place to address this with urgency.

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

Teaching remains strong in the early years. Teachers have high expectations of what the children are able to achieve. Children get off to a 'flying start' and develop skills above those typical for their age. Teachers know exactly what each child's next steps in learning should be. As a result, they plan tasks closely aligned to children's needs. Children gain skills and understanding rapidly. For example, the

quality of writing in this key stage is particularly strong. From typical starting points, children develop sound skills to write stories and information texts confidently in a beautiful cursive script. This results in children being well prepared for Year 1.

The quality of teaching has improved in key stage 1 and key stage 2 since the last inspection. Teaching is becoming more consistent across year groups and subjects and this is seen in the improved achievement of pupils. Teachers work closely as teams and make the most of the training opportunities they have to improve their effectiveness.

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen and, consequently, the rates at which pupils learn have increased. However, the work in pupils' books and the school's assessment information show the most able pupils are not sufficiently well challenged to deepen and develop their understanding in a range of subjects. In subjects such as history and science, for example, the work they do is similar to their peers and success is measured by the outcome of the tasks they undertake. Conversely, in mathematics, teachers plan much more closely for their needs. Tasks in this subject give the most able opportunities to explore and investigate mathematical concepts. This has resulted in the most able achieving better standards and progress in this subject.

The new 'achievement for all' system introduced before the last inspection is now fully established. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have focused teaching that is precisely matched to their needs. Teaching assistants have capitalised on the training they received and support these pupils well. As a result, these pupils make much better progress in learning.

Teachers say they are much more confident in using the school's assessment and tracking system. The work set for pupils is much better planned to match pupils' learning needs. However, the assessment system used to track pupils' learning and progress is not embedded. As a result, some of the assessment information is unreliable. This has resulted in some pupils being given work that is beyond their capability and some pupils being given work that is too easy in some classes. This accounts for the inconsistent standards and progress in some year groups and subjects.

Teachers have worked hard to improve the quality of feedback given to pupils in line with the school's policy. The comments in pupils' books and during lessons show this has been successful. Pupils receive good-quality feedback that results in improved understanding of learning, particularly in English and mathematics.

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

Pupils are eager to learn. They cooperate with their teachers and engage well in the tasks they are asked to complete, even if the work is not as challenging as it should be. Around the school, pupils are polite, well mannered and helpful. For example, they were often seen opening doors for each other, standing aside to let others pass and generally considering others' needs and feelings in class and outside.

## Outcomes for pupils

Current school assessment information indicates that, across the school in key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils are making better progress in mathematics, reading and, for the most part, in writing. The work in pupils' books confirms that attainment gaps in key stage 2 are closing. The wider gaps in attainment are in Year 5 and to some extent in Year 4. However, teachers are working hard to close the gaps. Progress indicators show they are becoming increasingly successful in their efforts and pupils are attaining standards closer to age-related expectations in all three subjects in these classes.

In Year 6, school assessment information suggests that the majority of pupils will achieve the expected standard in mathematics, reading, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling this year. The work in pupils' books generally indicates that this is an accurate prediction. There is a similar picture in Year 2 where the majority of pupils are predicted to achieve the expected standard in mathematics, reading and writing.

In the Year 1 phonics screening check, the proportion of pupils achieving the standard in 2016 is above that of the national average for the previous year. This continues the positive improvements in the quality of reading at the school. However, the work in pupils' books indicates that not all pupils apply their phonics knowledge when spelling common, high-frequency words.

Children in the early years make good progress in all seven early learning goals. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2016 is above that of the national average for the previous year.

The achievement of other pupils is inconsistent across year groups and subjects. The most able pupils do not always make the accelerated progress they should, particularly in writing and in subjects such as science or history. The work they do is not challenging enough to ensure they gain the skills and knowledge befitting their abilities. The school's assessment information suggests the most able pupils make the best progress in mathematics.

In writing, the work in pupils' books and school data indicate the majority of pupils working within age-related expectations. Generally, girls' attainment in this subject is higher than boys' attainment. Not enough pupils are working above age-related expectations in any year group. However, the attainment gaps are not wide. The majority of pupils make at least expected progress from their starting points with some pupils making accelerated progress. School data suggests the strongest progress in writing is in key stage 1 but, even here, not enough pupils make the accelerated progress they should, given their starting points at the end of early years.

In mathematics, pupils' attainment is strongest, with more pupils working above age-related expectations than in other subjects. The attainment of boys and girls in this subject is inconsistent. In some classes, boys' attainment is higher than girls'

and in other classes the opposite is the case. However, more pupils make accelerated progress than in other subjects. This is because teachers plan better to meet pupils' needs.

In reading, the school's assessment information suggests the majority of pupils are working well within age-related expectations. Pupils make at least expected progress and standards for boys and girls are broadly similar. The school's assessment data suggests few pupils make accelerated progress in this subject. This data appears to be unreliable. During the inspection, inspectors' observations indicated that pupils in this school read well and are developing sound reading skills. Pupils are articulate when talking about their reading and read widely and often.

The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. As a result, comparisons between them and their peers are not appropriate. However, school assessment data shows that attainment gaps between them and their peers are narrowing in mathematics, reading and writing.

### **External support**

The headteacher continues to receive some support from the external consultant. This support ensures the headteacher has an external view of the quality of teaching and learning at the school. It has also been effective in helping the mathematics and English leaders to begin to analyse and evaluate the quality of learning in their subjects. The governing body has been careful to ensure the school financial position is secure from a challenging financial position the previous year. As a result, there is only a small budget to access external support for the headteacher. Therefore, the quantity of external support has been relatively small. The headteacher reports that no additional support has been offered either by the regional schools commissioner or by the brokering of support through local authority advisers. As a result, this has slowed the progress of improvement at this school.