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14 July 2016

Mrs Vicky Hayles and Mr Jason Osprey  
Firbeck Academy  
Firbeck Road  
Wollaton  
Nottingham  
NG8 2FB

Dear Mrs Hayles and Mr Osprey

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Firbeck Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 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 March 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 can recommend that the school can appoint 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 Nottingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, including in the early years, by:
  - using assessment more effectively to identify the particular learning needs of all pupils
  - ensuring that the work provided for the pupils is focused on meeting their particular needs
  - ensuring that the work provided for pupils builds on their prior learning and allows opportunities for them to extend their learning
  - ensuring that the work provides sufficient and appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils, in particular the most able pupils
  - providing the pupils with precise information about how well they are doing and how they can improve, with reference to the relevant knowledge, skills and understanding
  - challenging and promoting the pupils' oracy and literacy consistently when commenting on the pupils' responses in lessons
  - establishing consistently high expectations of the pupils in relation to the presentation of their work
  - being more alert to and challenging any behaviour when pupils appear to be losing concentration or motivation
  - ensuring classroom routines and the organisation of pupils' work do not slow or interfere with learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including the early years, by:
  - focusing unequivocally on improving the quality of teaching
  - setting out a clear strategy and direction for improving the quality of teaching
  - ensuring that plans spell out clearly and precisely what actions will be taken to improve the quality of teaching
  - evaluating the quality of teaching incisively through the rigorous analysis of all the available evidence, including data about pupils' achievement
  - ensuring that teachers with responsibilities are enabled to make a full contribution to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching
  - ensuring that all aspects of the school's work are evaluated equally rigorously, including pupils' behaviour and safety.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 28 and 29 June 2016**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work and met with: the executive headteacher; the head of school; four members from the governing body, including the chair of the governing body; one member of the Nottingham University Samworth Academies Trust; leaders responsible for English, mathematics and the early years; and groups of pupils from key stages 1 and 2. We visited lessons and evaluated pupils' work. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I considered the school's most recent information on the attainment and progress of groups of pupils. Documentation relating to pupils' attendance, the behaviour and safety of pupils and arrangements for safeguarding pupils were also considered.

### **Context**

The school continues to have extensive building work. However, the work is scheduled to finish at the end of July 2016. Since the previous monitoring visit, the early years leader has resigned her leadership position and the deputy headteacher now carries out this role. The safeguarding family support worker has resigned. Members of the senior leadership team are sharing out the duties of this role. The Year 4 teacher has recently secured a teaching position in another school for September 2016.

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

The executive headteacher, head of school and deputy headteacher continue to work well together to improve the quality of teaching. Their monitoring is accurate, and as result, tailored professional development has been put in place to support teachers to improve their practice. The proportion of good teaching has continued to improve. However, there is still a significant minority of teaching that requires improvement.

Most pupils are making good progress from their starting points during the current academic year. Outcomes at the end of the Reception Year have risen and the current outcomes are higher than last year's national average. However, leaders recognise that the attainment of pupils is still too low in key stages 1 and 2. Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 in 2016 are expected to fall slightly from the outcomes in 2015. The predictions for the current Year 6 pupils are also expected to fall. However, there has been significant pupil mobility within the Year 6 cohort over the past two years which has affected the overall outcomes.

The deputy headteacher has continued to work with the local authority adviser to improve the provision in the early years. This has included training for staff to help develop the speech of the youngest children. As a result, most adults in the early years are expecting the children to speak more. In Nursery, children were excited to

paint a fence for Old MacDonald's farm and one child said, 'The fence is to stop the animals from escaping'.

The middle leaders for mathematics and English have completed some monitoring to check how well the subjects have been taught. The mathematics leader checked to see whether the school's policy for written calculations is being applied throughout the school. Through the scrutiny of work, it is clear that pupils are becoming more accurate with their written calculations. The leaders of English have checked pupils' books to see whether pupils are made to correct their spelling mistakes. However, their monitoring showed that not all teachers are consistently asking pupils to correct their spelling mistakes. As a result, pupils' spelling ability is not improving as quickly as it should be.

Middle leaders have not yet got a strategic overview of how well their subject is taught through the school and therefore cannot identify where practice is strong and where it needs to improve. As a result, pupils are not making as much progress as they could in all year groups. I have asked senior leaders to support middle leaders more with this aspect of their leadership.

Senior leaders have planned extensive meetings for teachers with other schools to support the accuracy of teachers' assessments. These meetings have focused on assessing pupils' writing and mathematics. Consequently, the reliability of teachers' assessments is improving.

The members of the trust and of the governing body have a good understanding of the progress that the school is making. Focused visits have allowed them to see the work of the school first-hand to inform their views. Minutes of governing body meetings show that they hold leaders to account. For example, governors questioned leaders why the outcomes in phonics were predicted to be lower than last year. Governors approved an extra in-service training day to enable teachers to receive training on teaching phonics. However, the training is too recent to judge the impact.

Parents I spoke to were positive about how the school is performing. They felt that the new senior leaders have made a difference and that the school is improving. Leaders have also conducted a recent parental survey, which showed that the vast majority of parents were positive about all aspects of the school.

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

The quality of teaching continues to improve and evidence in pupils' book shows that most pupils are making good progress from their starting points.

In Nursery, adults are asking the children more questions and as result, the children are talking more, both to adults and to each other. After learning about lighthouses, one pupil was asked what lighthouses do. She replied, 'Lighthouses shine a light to

help boats'. Adults are recording the responses of children to inform their assessments and plan the next steps. Adults have identified a group of children in Nursery who are reluctant communicators, and have put extra provision in place to develop their speaking and listening skills.

In the Reception Year, children have been enthused to write. Evidence in their books shows that children's letter formation has improved and most children are able to write one or two sentences. In mathematics, children have learned to order numbers to 20 and solve addition calculations up to 20. As a result, their progress is very good from their starting points.

In key stage 1, pupils are being given more opportunities to write at length and to problem solve in mathematics. In Year 1, pupils are developing good scientific knowledge and in Year 2 the teacher is encouraging pupils to extend their sentences by using conjunctions. However, in Year 1, some pupils are not sufficiently focused on their learning and consequently do not make as much progress as they should during lessons. In Year 2, expectations for the most able are too low. In mathematics, this group of pupils are not challenged well enough and calculations do not consistently make them think deeply enough.

Teachers and teaching assistants continue to provide good support in lessons to pupils who are deaf. This support enables the pupils to access the learning and creates an inclusive ethos within the classrooms. At times, the most able deaf pupils are not challenged sufficiently within the focused provision to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable.

In key stage 2, pupils continue to be given more opportunities to problem solve and to reason about number. Skilful questioning in Year 3 enabled a pupil to define clearly the denominator and numerator of a fraction and how these are formed. Most pupils were able to calculate fractions of shapes and the equivalent decimals and percentages. However, the school's assessment information shows that the most able pupils through the school and those in Year 5 are not achieving as well as they could in mathematics because they are not being sufficiently challenged.

Pupils in key stage 2 are being given more opportunities to write at length. This has improved pupils' text structure and most are now using paragraphs appropriately. In addition, pupils are also developing a wider vocabulary to improve their sentences. However, most pupils are still starting their sentences with a character's name or pronoun and not varying the complexity of their sentences to improve the overall piece of writing.

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

Most pupils are taking good care to present their work neatly. Pupils strive hard to achieve a pen licence and more pupils are joining their handwriting. In mathematics, pupils are setting out their calculations clearly to help ensure

accuracy. Classroom routines are well organised. Pupils move around the classrooms well and line up for assembly in a calm manner.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is mostly positive. Some pupils still have a tendency to shout out, which is addressed by teachers. At times, pupils are not always fully engaged in their learning because the teaching does not inspire them to learn. As a result, pupils' attention can wane and they do not make the progress that they should.

Pupils are respectful towards each other. When pupils from the focused provision for deaf pupils led an assembly about communication, other pupils and staff signed enthusiastically during the opening hymn, which created a harmonious start to the assembly.

Leaders closely analyse incidents of poor behaviour and take decisive action. As a result of higher expectations for how pupils should behave, there has been a small increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions in the current academic year. However, the number of incidents of poor behaviour has continued to reduce and there have been no exclusions in the last few weeks. The school continues to work successfully to engage with families and outside agencies to support pupils who have additional behavioural needs. This support has enabled some pupils to improve their behaviour and develop improved attitudes to learning.

Pupils' attendance has dropped slightly since the previous monitoring visit. This is largely due to illness, which affected many pupils in the second half of the spring term. Attendance after Easter has been good. The attendance officer is rigorous in her monitoring of attendance and punctuality. As a result, pupils' punctuality to school has improved this year and very few pupils are late.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school's tracking information shows that most pupils are making good progress from their starting points. As a result, the gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others are closing. However, the attainment of pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2 is still too low because pupils have not made the accelerated progress required from their low starting points to catch up. Outcomes for both these key stages are expected to be below last year's outcomes. However, there has been significant pupil mobility in the current Year 6 group, which has affected the outcomes. Most of the pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 have made good progress during the school year.

Outcomes at the end of Reception Year have risen considerably since last year and are now above the national average from last year. The children have made very good progress from their starting points. Evidence from the children's books shows that the teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations, which enables the children to make good progress.

Pupils who speak English as an additional language are given specific teaching to enable them to access their learning. The school's tracking information shows that as they start to learn English, they make good progress.

Outcomes in phonics have fallen from last year. Leaders had predicted this because the quality of provision is not as good as it should be. Training for staff has taken place and the school is reorganising how it will be teaching phonics. Support will continue to be given to those pupils who have not passed the phonics check.

The most able pupils have not made enough progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, to ensure that they are still achieving well against national standards. Although this group of pupils can write some effective sentences, they do not always maintain the standard of writing all the way through their work. In addition, they are not consistently asked by teachers to improve their work to ensure that it is of the standard that they are capable of achieving.

In mathematics, pupils' books show an increasing amount of problem solving and pupils are becoming more efficient with their calculations. However, the school's tracking data still shows that not enough pupils are reaching age-related expectations through the school, particularly in Year 5. In this year group, pupils were observed drawing a line graph of similar difficulty to one they had drawn two months earlier. As a result, this group of pupils have not made good progress with this aspect of mathematics.

### **External support**

The staff have continued to work with staff from Westdale Junior School and Birklands Primary School to moderate the judgements of pupils' writing and mathematics. As a result, the teachers' judgements are now more accurate.

The local authority adviser has continued to work effectively with the deputy headteacher to improve the provision in the early years. Staff from the early years have also attended moderation meetings and staff from Nursery have visited another school to learn from outstanding practice. As a result, the provision in Nursery has improved following the last monitoring visit.

The local authority has moderated the outcomes from the Reception class. The school's assessments were judged to be accurate.

Individual members of staff have received support to improve their teaching. This has been particularly successful in Years 4 and 6. All teachers have visited Birklands Primary School to look at the learning environment. The school continues to display pupils' work effectively and provide a good learning environment despite the building works.