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Darra McFadyen
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Dear Ms McFadyen

Special measures monitoring inspection of Beecholme Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 and 13 July 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 2015.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Two newly qualified teachers have been appointed to join the school when it converts to academy status in September 2016. HMI has advised leaders that the school does not have the capacity to support the induction of any further newly qualified teacher appointments during the next academic year.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth Dollner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - evaluating plans for improvement frequently and accurately, using well-managed, reliable information
 - setting ambitious targets for improvement
 - checking the quality of teaching thoroughly and using this information to provide effective support and training to improve its quality
 - developing governors' skills in challenging the effectiveness of school leaders and holding them to account.

- Improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils, so that both become consistently good or better, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use accurate assessment information to plan lessons that match the needs of pupils
 - make effective use of training and resources to improve rates of pupils' progress
 - help pupils master their skills in mathematics more
 - provide effective guidance and support for pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 July 2016

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher, the executive headteacher of the academy sponsor school, a representative of the local authority, the chair of the governing body, the subject leader with responsibility for English and the early years leading teacher. The inspector visited all classrooms and observed learning together with the interim headteacher. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement action plan were evaluated. A wide range of other documentation provided by the school was reviewed. This included the policy for safeguarding, the single central record (showing the suitability of staff to work with pupils), governing body minutes and records of the checks leaders make on the quality of teaching. A range of pupils' books taken from every classroom was scrutinised and information about the progress and attainment of pupils currently in the school was reviewed.

Context

An interim headteacher was appointed in January 2016 and was joined by an interim deputy headteacher in March 2016. An early years lead teacher was appointed following the previous inspection. The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher are leaving the school at the end of this term. The school will join the Chipstead Academy Trust in September 2016. Several teachers are leaving the school at the end of this term. The assistant headteacher and two other teachers will remain at the school when it converts to academy status. A head of school has been appointed and will take up her post in September 2016.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Improvement plans focus sharply on the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. With the good support of the local authority, the interim headteacher has swiftly put effective actions into place in accordance with these plans. Checks on the quality of teaching are thorough and incisive and lead to staff receiving appropriate training and support within and beyond the school. As a result, teaching in some year groups is improving and there are some early signs of improvement to pupils' outcomes.

Senior leaders now have more rigorous ways of checking on pupils' progress. Pupil progress meetings ensure that teachers understand the varying impact that they have on pupils' outcomes. Leaders have introduced a new marking and feedback policy which the majority of teachers have implemented. However, the impact of this on pupils' progress varies from class to class.

The subject leader with responsibility for English has worked with the interim headteacher to establish group reading sessions across the school. This has had an

impact on the quality of teaching of reading. Leaders have ensured that there has been investment in new reading books. However, many reading books in classrooms are very old and worn and do not inspire a love of reading. There is an insufficient supply of high-quality books for pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read.

The early years leading teacher has implemented effective new systems for recording children's progress. She has ensured that all staff adhere to the list of 'non-negotiables', which consist of agreed approaches she has produced to develop good practice across the early years.

Leaders and governors recently restructured the teaching assistant workforce in the school. This has led to more clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities. Teaching assistants understand the school's priority of improving pupil outcomes and when their work is directed effectively by teachers they have good impact on pupils' progress.

The interim headteacher has introduced 'pre-learning' groups which target pupils who are falling behind or those who are at the earliest stages of learning to speak English. This provision is developing pupils' positive attitude to learning and helping them to make progress.

Governors have worked well with the local authority and the sponsor academy to develop their skills in challenging the effectiveness of the school. A new, highly skilled governor has been recruited and the governing body have benefited from the guidance from the chair of governors at the academy sponsor school. The arrangements for safeguarding continue to be effective. The interim headteacher and governors have ensured that appropriate preparation has been made for the school's transition to academy status.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is showing signs of improvement since the previous inspection but inadequate teaching has not yet been eradicated in all year groups.

Teachers have implemented new assessment and planning systems and have worked hard to improve their skills in response to the training and support they have received. The teaching of writing has improved and books show that most pupils have made progress in writing this year. However, lower-attaining writers are sometimes given tasks which do not match their needs. As a result they often make less progress than their classmates.

Improvements in the teaching of mathematics are less clear. Teachers rely heavily on worksheets which do not meet the needs of the different ability groups effectively. Lower-attaining pupils are often given the same worksheet as others. As

a result they can struggle to complete the work on their own or rely heavily on teaching assistants to help them access the work. The strongest mathematics teaching was seen in the early years classes and in the Year 5 class, where tasks were matched carefully to pupils' needs and effective questioning by the teacher deepened pupils' mathematical skills and understanding.

Teachers have implemented a new marking and feedback system. While the system is used by most of the teachers, it does not always support pupils' progress effectively. When it is used well, guidance to pupils is simple and clear and pupils are able to respond positively to improve their work. However, books show that some teachers do not give clear guidance to pupils or do not give pupils opportunities to respond to their comments. Sometimes the comments teachers make are negative in tone or use language which pupils at the earliest stages of developing reading and writing skills do not understand. All pupils have targets for reading and writing. In some classes, but not all, pupils know their targets and can explain what they are working on. Group reading sessions have been introduced across the school since the previous inspection. This has had notable impact in Years 4 and 5, where teachers' questioning supports pupils' deeper understanding of the texts they read.

During the inspection, pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to speak English were well supported by teaching assistants in lessons and in the pre-learning groups which take place before the start of the school day. During sessions observed, teaching assistants modelled and explained new vocabulary very well and helped pupils to make progress in their spoken and written English. The quality of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) teaching is variable. Reception children benefit from good teaching and as a result are developing phonics skills which are appropriate for their age. Phonics teaching in Year 1 is inadequate and leads to weak progress because the planned activities do not meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils make little progress during these teaching sessions. This is reflected in the very low outcomes in the most recent phonics screening check.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are friendly, polite and respectful. Their behaviour in the playground and around the school is generally good. They enjoy being at school. They say that they are safe and well cared for. Parents who were spoken to during the inspection agree that their children are safe, happy and looked after well. Pupils try hard in lessons. Even when teaching is at its weakest, they maintain a positive attitude to learning. Occasionally, when tasks do not match their needs, pupils' attention wanders and this can lead to some low-level disruption.

Pupils work and play well together. Year 5 and 6 pupils worked with a music specialist for a day during the inspection. Their behaviour throughout the sessions was impeccable. They worked collaboratively and performed confidently for the whole school at the end of the day. Pupils in the audience behaved respectfully and enjoyed the performance.

Safeguarding is effective and thorough checks are made on the suitability of staff. Despite the advice given at the time of the previous inspection, governors have been slow to review the safeguarding policy. Nevertheless, leaders take swift and effective action to keep pupils safe.

Parents have concerns about the flooding at the entrance to the school when there is heavy rainfall, as it poses a health and safety risk. The interim headteacher has ensured that funding has been secured from the local authority to rectify this, and other building issues, prior to the conversion to academy status.

Outcomes for pupils

In partnership with the local authority, leaders set ambitious targets for improvement. These targets were not met in 2016. Nevertheless, some improvements to pupils' outcomes are evident. A much higher proportion of children leaving the Reception Year have achieved a good overall level of development. Year 6 pupils leaving the school this year have achieved standards which are in line with the national average in reading and slightly above in mathematics. Their attainment in writing is just below the national average. The combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above the national average.

Outcomes for the pupils in Year 2 are below those expected, particularly in writing. In the Year 1 phonics screening check the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard dropped significantly this year. Progress made by this year group in reading and writing this year is inadequate. Progress in books across Years 3 and 4 is variable. The most-able pupils have made stronger progress from starting points than other pupils. The strongest progress was seen in Year 5, where all pupils have made at least expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Books indicate that the progress pupils make across the school in mathematics is much weaker than the progress they make in writing.

External support

Since the previous inspection the local authority has provided good support to the school. Local authority advisers have supported the interim headteacher in undertaking reviews and provided advisory support for teachers from specific subject specialists. The sponsor academy has also provided good support through sharing good practice and through the guidance provided by the executive headteacher and the chair of governors. The local authority, the executive headteacher, the interim headteacher and governors have worked together effectively to ensure plans are in place to facilitate a smooth transition to academy status.