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Ms Jane Cartlidge
Headteacher
Southfield Primary School
Banbury Road
Brackley
Northamptonshire
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Dear Ms Cartlidge

Special measures monitoring inspection of Southfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school with Catherine Crooks, Her Majesty's Inspector, Jane Moore, Ofsted Inspector, and Jane Burton, Ofsted Inspector, on 18–19 October 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 fifth 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 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 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 fifth monitoring inspection on 18–19 October 2016

Evidence

During this monitoring inspection, inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held meetings with the headteacher and two subject leaders. A further meeting was held with the assessment leader and the early years leader. An inspector also met with two members of the governing body. An inspector held a telephone conversation with the school's external consultant. Inspectors met with a two groups of pupils. An inspector listened to pupils read their books. Inspectors considered the responses on Parent View, and spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in visits to 17 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. Inspectors examined school documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils. The single central record was checked.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the deputy headteacher has resigned. One teacher has resigned. Five new leaders of year group phases and subjects have been appointed from among the teaching staff. An extended services manager has been appointed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has begun to build her new leadership team. She has successfully shared her vision for school improvement with them. The new team are enthusiastic and equally as committed to secure school improvement as the headteacher. This revision to the leadership team has been planned for some time. The change to roles and responsibilities means that the headteacher no longer carries the responsibility for school improvement alone. Leaders, apart from the headteacher, are very new to their roles. Subject and phase leaders know what needs to be done to raise standards further. However, they have not been able to demonstrate the impact necessary to show their effectiveness as a team. This is currently a high priority for the headteacher and the governing body. Further training and support from the external consultant is planned but has not yet taken place.

Changes to the teaching team have strengthened the capacity of the school to bring about further improvements in the quality of teaching. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely and work with individual teachers to improve practice. For example, a phase leader worked with her team to ensure that all teachers were following the mathematics scheme agreed by the school. The improvements in the quality of teaching have raised standards considerably so the majority of pupils are now working within age-related expectations in mathematics, reading and writing.

The headteacher and the assessment leader know there are some anomalies in the new assessment system used by the school. This has resulted in some of the assessment information not being precise enough to support teachers to plan as accurately as necessary to raise standards. The assessment leader has adjusted the way teachers assess the learning of pupils so that there is greater clarity about how attainment and progress are measured. These changes are not well established and as a result, leaders are not able to demonstrate evidence of impact in improving the quality of planning and teaching at this time.

Children are safe in school. Systems to keep pupils safe are well established. Leaders ensure that those working with pupils are recruited safely. Training to support all staff to identify safeguarding concerns, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation for example, are addressed with urgency by school leaders. Leaders are fully aware of the risks of extremism within the community. Leaders acted urgently when such a risk was identified. Adults respond appropriately to the signs and symptoms of concerns about pupils by making school leaders aware in a timely manner. Leaders act to ensure that wider concerns are shared with external agencies in order to secure pupils' safety. However, not all of the actions are recorded clearly in school records. This leaves the records incomplete and represents some risk when leaders need to recall when and where decisions were made to support the safeguarding of pupils.

The headteacher identified the need to revise the way in which pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities have their learning needs met. Individual education plans were not precise enough to support their progress in learning. Not enough pupils in this group make the progress they should in line with their peers. In a meeting with parents during the inspection, parents expressed mixed views on the quality of provision. The headteacher has acted with urgency to rectify the weaknesses in provision. However, these changes are in the early stages of development and the impact has yet to be measured.

The governing body is determined and knowledgeable. Governors know exactly what they need to do to challenge school leaders to improve their effectiveness. Governors have a sound understanding of the quality of teaching and learning.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching across the school remains secure. There has been a change of leadership for the early years. The new leader has a sound knowledge of the quality of learning within this key stage. Teachers support children to gain self-confidence in learning new skills. Children play well together and share the toys and equipment with consideration. For example, during the inspection, two children were able to negotiate the use of a computer with the help of their teacher. Both children demonstrated understanding of turn-taking and working together. Teachers in the early years are aware that not all the equipment in the early years classrooms is of the best quality. Some is old and past its usefulness.

This limits the effectiveness of resources to challenge and inspire children, particularly the most able children.

The quality of teaching remains secure in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Pupils have increased opportunities for writing across a range of subjects. However, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of outcomes across classes within year groups. Not all teachers expect the same volume of work as others and the quality of pupils' presentation is also inconsistent. Although outcomes in Year 6 have improved considerably, particularly at the higher standard, this is not the case across the whole school. The most able pupils do not consistently receive the challenge they need to make the rapid progress they should.

Teachers ensure that pupils have the opportunity to read for pleasure and for their learning. New interventions to support the development of reading meet the needs of most pupils well. Pupils use their phonics skills to decode unfamiliar words. The most able pupils read complex words and are confident in explaining the sense of the text. Teachers ensure that they teach reading skills daily and listen to pupils to check the quality of their learning. This has resulted in improved outcomes in this subject.

Teachers use their feedback to pupils to good effect. In most cases, pupils respond well to the guidance they receive. This has resulted in better progress for many pupils. However, teachers' planning is not as effective as it should be because they do not have accurate assessment information to support their planning. This results in planning that does not challenge pupils sufficiently well, particularly for the most able pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Parents believe their children are safe at the school. During the inspection, parents expressed support for the changes to the quality of teaching and learning. The majority of parents spoken with were supportive of school leaders and the direction the school is taking. This is a considerable improvement from previous monitoring visits, where parental views were more mixed.

Around school and in classrooms, there are positive relationships between pupils and the adults who work with them. Pupils enjoy being challenged by the work they do. Pupils say they feel safe in school. However, not all pupils demonstrate a pride in their work and sometimes presentation can be untidy.

During the inspection, pupils behaved well at playtime and lunchtime. Inspectors noted that not all areas of the playground were well supervised and as a result, risks to pupils' safety were identified.

Outcomes for pupils

Current unvalidated school assessment information shows that standards have risen across the school. The majority of pupils are now working within age-related expectations for reading, writing and mathematics. In a wider range of subjects, this is not the case. Standards in other subjects, such as art and science, are much more inconsistent. Leaders do not know how well pupils are doing in these subjects.

Children in the early years make good progress in their learning. The proportion achieving a good level of development in 2016 was equal to that achieved in the previous year. This would be above the national average for 2015. Outcomes across all 17 early learning goals are also high for the vast majority of children. However, the proportion of children exceeding a good level of development is relatively small. This suggests that the most able children do not make the accelerated progress they should.

In Year 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check was above the national average for 2015. The work in pupils' books in key stage 1 suggests that this is having a positive impact on spelling in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2. However, spelling continues to be inconsistent for the older pupils. Leaders are aware that this weakness needs to be addressed with urgency.

In 2016, unvalidated outcomes for the Year 2 and Year 6 assessments showed a positive picture. In Year 2, the proportion achieving the expected standard and the higher standard were above the national average in mathematics, reading and writing. In Year 6, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard and the higher standard was broadly in line with the national average. However, in writing, the proportion achieving the higher standard was well above the national average. Boys' outcomes were not as high as other boys nationally in mathematics and reading.

The assessment information for current pupils is not available. This is because school leaders have revised the way in which pupils are assessed. Leaders are in the process of compiling this information. Leaders are aware that the end-of-year assessments for 2016 were unreliable in mathematics, reading and writing in year groups other than the early years, Year 2 and Year 6. The assessment information gave too positive a picture of pupils' attainment. Work in pupils' books confirms this.

External support

Since the previous inspection, the school has received some further support from the external consultant. This has resulted in further adjustments to the staffing team within the school. The local authority has also made contact with the school to identify how it can best support further school improvement. However, these actions are not yet agreed and further meetings are planned to identify what

support the local authority is able to offer to help school leaders secure the necessary changes to the quality of provision.

School leaders should also:

- ensure that all safeguarding records are fully completed so that actions taken to keep pupils safe are clear and precise
- ensure that systems to provide for the special educational needs of pupils are rigorously and effectively monitored to ensure that pupils' needs are addressed precisely.