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19 December 2016

Mr Matthew Mander
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mander

Special measures monitoring inspection of Brockhampton Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 29–30 November 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 January 2016.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint any newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring visit.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2016.

- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
 - subject leaders are equipped with the skills needed to evaluate the progress made by pupils, including in the early years, and provide relevant support to improve teaching
 - checks on teaching give sufficient attention to the progress of different groups of pupils, particularly the most able, disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs
 - action plans are evaluated against measureable criteria so that leaders and governors can determine the success of actions taken
 - staff are held fully to account for raising outcomes
 - attendance information is used more effectively to challenge lateness and persistent absence
 - governors fulfil their duties effectively and establish effective communication with parents
 - the academy's website meets the statutory requirements and provides parents with the relevant information.

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by making sure that all teachers:
 - accurately assess pupils' abilities and set suitably challenging tasks, especially for the most able
 - plan work which builds on from previous learning and moves pupils on in lessons when they show that they understand the work set
 - use accurate written language at all times, address common spelling errors made by pupils and correct calculations accurately
 - make effective use of additional adults to support learners
 - insist on and only accept the highest standards of presentation in pupils' work.

- Raise pupils' achievement in all subjects, especially in writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - additional funding is fully accounted for, well managed and spent wisely to improve outcomes and provision for sports and for disadvantaged pupils
 - those who have special educational needs are supported effectively
 - pupils have more opportunities to explain their thinking in mathematics and to solve problems
 - pupils are taught spelling strategies to improve their writing.

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 school'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 first monitoring inspection on 29 November 2016 to 30 November 2016

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders, pupils, members of the interim academy board and an educational consultant. In addition, the inspector spoke with parents on the playground at the beginning of the school day and had a meeting with two parents. The inspector looked at pupils' books, various documents and the school's website. The single central record of checks on staff was also checked.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in January 2016, three teachers and two teaching assistants have left the school. Three new full-time teachers and one part-time teacher started in September 2016. Two of these teachers are newly qualified teachers and the interim academy board informed Ofsted before making these appointments. A teacher from Lickhill Primary School has been seconded to Brockhampton Primary School to act as assistant headteacher.

In the spring 2016, the governing body was replaced by an interim academy board (IAB). The long-term intention is for Brockhampton Primary School to join a multi-academy trust but, at this stage, no decisions have been made.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's current position. He acknowledges that the school needs to improve and has stepped up to the task with ambition, good humour, humility and common sense. He is a visible and approachable presence in school, has gained the trust of parents and has a solid grasp of what constitutes effective teaching and learning. He is prepared to give hard messages when necessary but is quick to give praise when it is deserved. Staff report a stronger sense of teamwork and say that the school is now very different to how it used to be. The current school leadership is on the right track and the school is improving. Improvements in teaching are significant.

In the past, staff were left to 'get on with it' and were given little guidance or feedback about the quality or impact of their work. This has now changed. Through his calm insistence, the headteacher, with the support of the IAB, has implemented a set of non-negotiable expectations for daily routines and classroom practice. Teachers have been set targets linked with their effectiveness in the classroom and plans are in place to improve the guidance given to teaching assistants. The headteacher and other leaders make regular checks on teaching and learning to make sure everyone is 'on board' and pulling in the same direction. Staff now have

a clearer understanding of what is expected from them and are held to account by a leadership they trust.

Furthermore, the headteacher has established a more evaluative culture where staff get timely feedback and training and openly reflect on their practice. Agreed policies for aspects of teaching and learning, such as marking or homework, are now applied with greater consistency. Understandably, actions to date have focused on improving the quality of teaching and raising classroom expectations and academic standards. This focus is paying off, as the most recent key stage 2 test results indicate. Nevertheless, there is still more to be done to establish consistently strong practice across the school and to develop subject leadership roles.

Currently, subject leaders are in post and display keen potential. In some instances, subject leaders have examined pupils' books and shared findings at staff meetings. In order to benchmark standards and develop their leadership skills, they have met and worked with colleagues in other schools. The assistant headteacher, on secondment from Lickhill Primary School, is also playing a part in developing this tier of leadership. She is providing oversight across the early years and is proving to be a steadying hand at times of uncertainty. All of this paints a picture of subject leadership that is keen to learn but is still at an early stage of development and reliant on guidance in order to grow.

Until now, the deputy headteacher's focus has been on maintaining standards in the classroom, rather than helping to set strategy and monitor performance. This senior role now needs to develop further in order to provide key backup for the headteacher. Indeed, the development and effectiveness of leadership provided by the deputy headteacher and subject leaders will be a key focus of the next monitoring inspection.

A new system for tracking pupils' progress has been introduced. This gives leaders an overview of standards at the school and allows them to extract information about individuals and key groups, including the most able, disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are confident that this assessment tool provides the information and oversight they need. They also acknowledge that, like many schools, staff are still getting to grips with the fine detail of the new national assessment arrangements.

The IAB was formed in April 2016 and has taken steps to keep parents informed about their work to set strategy and drive improvement at the school. Minutes from meetings are shared via the school's website and due regard is paid to proper processes. Any misunderstandings about the purpose and role of governance at the school are now in the past, although future arrangements for long-term governance remain uncertain. Parents report that communication between home and school has improved. They say that, while staff have always been approachable, there is now more routine and clarity of expectation than there used to be. Parents' evenings and

pupils' school reports have a tighter focus on progress and homework is more regular and relevant to pupils' learning needs.

Key messages about the importance of good attendance and punctuality are flagged up on a weekly basis. Numerous rewards motivate pupils to attend regularly and on time. In response, overall attendance figures have risen and there has been a slight drop in the number of pupils with under 90% attendance. While these headlines are encouraging, leaders are not yet doing enough to analyse the details behind absence statistics to find out whether pupils are absent or late without good cause. In addition, there are still a few parents who bring their children to school a few minutes late. This poor punctuality is a bad habit that, over a term, adds up to a lot of lost learning time.

The school's website has been refreshed and is a useful source of information for parents. That said, a few statutory requirements are still not met. Specifically, information about how the school complies with the public sector equality duty is missing and the published policies for special educational needs and charging and remissions are out of date.

Leaders' action plans, put in place in response to the January inspection, include clear and specific success criteria, which are appropriate and suitably ambitious. As already noted, improvements at the school are evident. At this stage, however, it is too early to express a fully informed view about the long-term impact of actions taken.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

In all classes, the quality of teaching has improved and pupils' attainment is rising. Teachers' planning follows an agreed format and identifies how the different abilities within each class will be catered for by the activities set. The expectations and routines for checking on pupils' progress are consistent across the school. However, the way in which staff interpret the new assessment measures varies between classes. To be fair, given the recent national changes in assessment, this is the case in many schools. However, at Brockhampton Primary School – where expectations have been too low in the past – there is a greater sense of urgency to get it right. To this end, teachers are working with staff in other schools to moderate their assessments and sharpen their eye for making accurate judgements.

Another key priority for the school is to ensure that the most able pupils are pushed on in a timely and appropriate manner. All are alert to this and plan for it to happen in lessons. Even so, this is managed more successfully in some classes and subjects than in others. Pupils' mathematics books from Year 2 and Year 6 show the brightest pupils are being challenged to think deeply and are able to tackle some demanding work with success. In fact, mathematics teaching seen during this inspection was well pitched to the needs of the most able. In Year 1, for example, pupils had to consider whether statements about 2D shapes were always true,

sometimes true or never true. Elsewhere, Year 6 pupils had to think hard and articulate their reasoning as they organised information about fractions and percentages on a grid. In Year 2, pupils coped well with simple algebra because of the clarity of the teacher's guidance and explanations. However, here and there some shortcomings remain. In Year 6 science, for example, a strong start then fizzled out because teaching did not build carefully enough on pupils' current level of understanding of scientific variables. Pupils of all abilities were unsure of what was required and learning time was lost because teaching did not pick up misunderstandings soon enough.

In the main, teachers do model clear pronunciation and correct written language when teaching. Slips are rare, but they do happen. Just occasionally, teachers make clerical errors when writing guidance for pupils to follow. This is something for staff to watch out for and for leaders at all levels to challenge and correct. Having said this, the quality of teachers' marking has improved hugely and is making real difference to the precision of teachers' lesson planning. Staff and pupils are now better informed about next steps in learning and this is building confidence and a sense of success.

The presentation of work in pupils' books still presents something of a mixed picture. At its best, presentation is excellent but, in some books, work is messy. The school's approach to the teaching of handwriting could be improved. In the Reception class, children are encouraged to do their best and teaching builds confidence and independence. At times, however, teaching tells rather than shows. While some children cope well with this, some do not. Consequently, the development of careful letter formation and pencil grip is a bit hit or miss.

All in all, teaching across the school presents a most encouraging picture. In all classes, teachers inject purpose and energy to their work. In addition to the examples already mentioned, teaching in Year 4 is often lively, creative and fun. In Year 3, teaching has brisk purpose and firm expectation. In Year 5, the attention to key skills is paying off. Yes, there is more to be done to make sure all pupils achieve to the best of their abilities, but school leaders and staff are on the right track.

Outcomes for pupils

Assessment arrangements changed in 2016, so this year's results are not comparable to those from previous years. Nonetheless, by any measure it is clear that standards at the end of key stage 2 rose this year, especially in reading and mathematics. In these two subjects, standards were above the national average and progress measures for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, were above national figures. Progress and standards in writing were not so strong, and boosting achievement in this subject remains a key target for the school.

Additional funds to provide extra provision for disadvantaged pupils and for school sports are used for their intended purposes with increasing effectiveness. Following

a review of the use of pupil premium, leaders now make sure that these funds are properly accounted for and used in response to pupils' needs. For instance, a breakfast club is helping to reduce lateness, and extra tuition, especially in reading, spelling and comprehension, now operates in a more proportionate and focused way. Participation rates in after-school sports clubs have risen and pupils have enjoyed success at a local cross-country running event. Staff have analysed pupils' achievement in sport and identified where improvements have been made.

Leaders have given careful thought to ways of improving support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. First and foremost, all teachers now understand that catering for the full range of needs within their class is a key responsibility of their job. This shows clearly in their planning and the increasing effectiveness of their teaching. Secondly, extra support is now planned and checked with more care than before. A 'thrive' group, set up to help pupils with aspects of their social or emotional development, operates daily and provides a calm environment for pupils to talk about their feelings, develop empathy and build confidence. Group work in the 'badger room' serves to help pupils with key literacy and numeracy skills. This, too, is worthwhile.

External support

External support is proving to be effective. Since the January 2016 inspection, the school has benefited from a range of external support. The headteacher from Lickhill Primary School has worked closely with Brockhampton, especially on developing assessment and shaping strategic planning. Staff have visited the school and the two academies have shared training. Links with Marlbook Primary School and Coppice Primary School have also proved useful. In addition, an independent educational consultant has provided training and offered helpful advice.