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Ms Claire Macfie
Acting Headteacher
Wilberforce Primary
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Dear Ms Macfie

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wilberforce Primary

Following my visit with Sheila Cohring, Ofsted Inspector, and Jonathan Newby, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 23 February 2017, 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 and your leaders made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in April 2016. 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.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers. The newly qualified teachers currently at the school are being extremely well supported to develop their skills. However, you do not have the leadership capacity to support the induction of further newly qualified teachers at this point in time.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body, the director of the United Learning Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Westminster. 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 April 2016.

- Leaders, managers and those responsible for governance should set a clear vision for the school's future that is communicated to and shared by leaders, members of staff, parents and pupils.
- Improve leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that the principal and senior leaders work together to develop a strong team ethos supporting middle leaders to develop their knowledge and experience so that they can be held accountable for areas of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and therefore pupils' outcomes, by:
 - developing a culture of high expectations which is clearly understood by adults and pupils
 - ensuring that leaders check the quality of teaching and take action to improve it
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information to precisely plan activities that will secure faster progress for groups of pupils
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are set challenging activities which enable them to reach their full potential.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils both in and out of lessons, by:
 - ensuring that a clear behaviour policy is in place, understood by pupils and consistently applied
 - reducing the number of serious behaviour incidents
 - eliminating low-level disruption in lessons by setting up and embedding routines that support pupils' better behaviour.
- Improve the attendance of pupils and reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 23 February 2017

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the director of the trust, the chair of the local governing body board, the key stage 2 leader and the special educational needs coordinator. During the inspection, interviews to appoint a substantive headteacher were taking place. As a result of the need for candidates to observe teaching and learning, inspectors observed learning in all classrooms except two. The school's strategic action plan was evaluated. A range of other documentation was reviewed. This included governing body and United Learning Trust's minutes of meetings, records relating to safeguarding children and records relating to leaders' checks on the quality of teaching.

Inspectors scrutinised a large sample of pupils' books and reviewed the school's information about the progress and attainment of pupils who are currently in the school. Inspectors talked to pupils in classrooms, in the playground and as they moved around the school. Inspectors talked in detail to a group of pupils about their views on the school. Inspectors spoke to a number of parents to gather their views and also considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, a small number of staff have left. However, the teaching workforce has been stable for the past half term. An advisory headteacher has recently been appointed to support the acting headteacher in the absence of the executive headteacher. There is an urgent need to secure a strong key stage 1 and early years leader. The special educational needs coordinator, who was appointed at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, is leaving at the end of term. The mixed Year 3 and 4 classes have now become separate Year 3 and Year 4 classes. The school roll continues to fall, affected by local housing issues.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Despite the constant challenges in relation to the recruitment and retention of key staff, leaders, including governors, have put actions in place to secure further improvements to teaching and learning. The acting headteacher provides strong, calm leadership. Staff trust in her leadership and feel appropriately challenged and supported by it. They have faith in her ability to develop them as teachers.

There continues to be a clear vision of improvement, which is shared by leaders, the trust and the local governing body board. Leaders honed the strategic plan following the first monitoring visit to ensure that the feedback they received was acted on effectively.

The impact of the school's collaboration with the chair of the local governing body board's own school is clear. Teachers have responded well to training and to visits to the school. As a result, improvements to the quality of teaching and to the learning environment are clear in some classes. Some teachers have effectively introduced the school's 'working wall' approach. This is helping pupils to reflect on the process of learning. For example, in one key stage 2 classroom, the stages of the writing process were displayed in an interesting way to capture pupils' interest and support their writing.

Leaders continue to be accurate in their evaluations of the quality of teaching across the school. They target support for teachers appropriately. However, they recognise that there is still much to do. There are pockets of strong teaching now evident in the school but, collectively, teaching, learning and assessment continue to require improvement, as they are variable.

Leaders and teachers have worked hard to implement and embed the assessment system. Tracking systems are used consistently across the school and leaders ensure that pupils' progress meetings challenge teachers to identify pupils who need support and catch-up. Leaders agree that the assessment system needs further refinement. While the system currently supports leaders in identifying the progress that different groups of pupils make, leaders do not yet forensically analyse the group data to identify pupils who may fall into more than one group. For example, disadvantaged pupils who may also have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not identified. The current system charts pupils' progress towards meeting age-related expectations at the end of any given year. It does not give leaders a clear picture of the progress from starting points of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The key stage 2 phase leader has continued to develop his role since the previous visit. He has had a good impact on the quality of teaching in Year 6 and has a good understanding of the priorities which will move teaching and learning on further in his phase group.

Leaders continue to work hard to ensure that attendance is improving. Weekly newsletters celebrate good attendance. Attendance and the rate of persistent absence are better at this point in the academic year than they were in the previous year.

Parents continue to have mixed views about the school. Many parents are highly positive. Some are concerned about the staff turnover and the changes to the way the year groups have been organised.

The school's progress towards the removal of special measures is hampered by issues of leadership capacity. The recruitment of a strong substantive headteacher, special needs coordinator, early years and key stage 1 leader will be crucial in ensuring that the school is removed from special measures within appropriate timescales.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching continues to require improvement. There are pockets of stronger teaching evident in the school, which are leading to strong progress for some pupils. For example, books show that pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 are making strong progress in writing. The most able pupils in Year 6 are making good progress. Books show that progress in mathematics is variable. The most able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. In part, this is due to the fact that all pupils are required to go through all stages of any given mathematics task. For the most able pupils, this sometimes means that they are reviewing prior learning for too long and are not challenged to move on to the next challenge swiftly enough, to enable them to make rapid progress. Leaders recognise that this practice needs to be reviewed. Key stage 2 leaders rightly identify this as an area for development.

Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 have recently been re-organised so that they are in two separate classes. Teachers have risen to the challenge of this, but are still in the process of getting to know what the pupils in their class know and can do, in order to plan appropriate work for them.

In key stage 1, teachers sometimes use language that is too complicated for learners to understand and use when they are reflecting on their next steps in learning. Leaders recognise that guidance given to pupils needs to reflect the current stage of pupils' speech and language development.

Progress in the early years this term is weak. Some of it is inadequate. This is due to staff changes and to weak teaching. Early years staff are being supported well by the trust and by advisory services bought in from the local authority.

The school's assessment information shows a clear relationship between the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Leaders are incisive in their understanding of this relationship. Teachers are held to account for pupils' progress but they are also supported well to improve their skills. Teachers are reflective, positive and enthusiastic about the challenges they face. The vast majority of staff show unfaltering commitment to improving their skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Behaviour continues to improve. There were no incidents of poor behaviour seen in classrooms during the inspection. There have been no serious behaviour incidents since the previous visit. Behaviour in the playground continues to be well supervised and was good during the inspection. Routines for lining up are well established and pupils know how they are expected to behave.

Pupils are welcoming and friendly. They are keen to tell visitors about the school and believe that the school is improving. They say that fights 'used to happen, but don't any more'. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were unanimous in their view that they were kept safe at school. They show a good understanding of e-safety. Pupils say that they enjoy school. Some of them miss some of the clubs, which used to be on offer, particularly those involving sports.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils across the school continue to make variable progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in some classes, progress in writing is stronger. Books and the school's tracking data show that most pupils have made progress this year. Weaker progress is identified swiftly by leaders and appropriate additional support is identified. There has been an improvement in the progress the most able pupils make in writing. Some pupils in Years 1, 2 and 6 have made rapid progress. The most able readers in Year 6 read books that challenge them well and help them make good progress.

Pupils in Years 2 and Year 6 are on track to achieve stronger outcomes in the end-of-year assessments than were achieved by pupils in 2016.

The school's information about how well pupils are doing shows variability in the progress and attainment of different groups in each year group. In key stage 1, girls are generally outperforming boys. In Year 5, disadvantaged pupils are doing less well than other pupils. Leaders have analysed this data carefully to inform their pupils' progress meetings. They recognise that the next step is to look at pupils who fall into more than one group, in order to understand their data more fully and to check for any common issues across the school.

Information provided by leaders about the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is stark. This is because it does not recognise the progress from pupils' individual starting points effectively. Leaders recognise that charting this progress more rigorously will give them a more positive picture of the progress these pupils are making.

External support

The school continues to have good, supportive links with the local authority. External advice is used well to support the development of the early years provision.

The United Learning Trust provides comprehensive support to the school. The trust works well in partnership with the local governing body to ensure that priorities are clear and that actions taken to support and challenge leaders and teachers are effective.

The trust continues to offer strong 'hands-on' support to improve provision. Following the last monitoring visit, leaders judged that progress to improve the learning environment in the early years provision was too slow. A group of colleagues from the trust were immediately deployed to make some swift improvements to the provision. As a result, the learning environment is much improved. Despite this, teaching, learning and assessment in the early years continue to require improvement. This is, in part, due to retention and recruitment issues.

A new temporary advisory headteacher has been appointed by the trust but has only just taken up post. Therefore, the impact of this support is yet to be seen.