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22 May 2017

Mrs Donna Adams
Principal
Knottingley St Botolphs C of E Academy
Primrose Vale
Knottingley
West Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Adams

Special measures monitoring inspection of Knottingley St Botolphs C of E Academy

Following my visit to your school on 9 to 10 May 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 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 May 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young
Ofsted Inspector

Annex

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

- Leaders and managers must ensure that safeguarding is effective by:
 - responding in a timely and rigorous way to any allegations or concerns that pupils may be suffering, or are at risk of suffering, harm and sharing information in a timely manner with the relevant authority
 - following up on any referrals made to the local authority to make sure that prompt action is taken
 - reviewing all safeguarding procedures to ensure that they meet statutory requirements and applying safeguarding policies with rigour.
- Improve teaching so that the rate of pupils' progress improves and standards are raised, especially in writing by:
 - checking that each pupil is making enough progress from the standard they reached at the end of the previous phase of their education
 - ensuring that all teachers challenge the most able pupils in all subjects, so more pupils reach above average standards
 - providing teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach writing well, so that pupils' vocabulary, sentence-making skills and handwriting improve
 - ensuring all support staff are used well throughout lessons
 - demanding more of pupils in a wide range of subjects and making sure pupils always produce their best work.
- Improve provision in early years by:
 - helping more children to make more than typical progress by the time they leave the Reception class
 - making sure the assessments of children's knowledge, skills and understanding as they enter the Nursery are accurate
 - providing more purposeful and challenging opportunities for children to write across a range of provision
 - more fully involving parents in their children's learning and assessment.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - eliminating boisterous and aggressive behaviours
 - addressing the use of any discriminatory language

- helping those pupils who struggle to control their own behaviour to become more self-disciplined.
 - Better prepare pupils for life in modern Britain by ensuring the curriculum provides more opportunities for pupils to learn about a range of cultures.
 - Reduce persistent absence rates for disadvantaged pupils.
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Report on the second monitoring inspection on 9 to 10 May 2017

Evidence

During the inspection meetings were held with the principal, the vice- and assistant principals, all members of the interim advisory board and the school's adviser from the diocese. Meetings were also held with the staff responsible for attendance, personal, social and health education (PSHE), early years and the learning mentor. Pupils and staff were spoken to during social times and a formal meeting was held with members of the academy council. The inspector observed learning and behaviour in all classes. A range of documentation was reviewed and the inspector scrutinised a selection of English, mathematics and topic books from all year groups.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in January 2017, the acting principal has been appointed to the substantive post of principal. One of the Year 3 teachers has been absent since the end of January. Their post is being covered by long-term supply teachers. Two members of staff are due to take maternity leave imminently; however, staff are already in place to cover their absences. One of these members of staff will assume the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). No final decision has been made regarding the long-term future for the school in respect of a proposed move to a different multi-academy trust.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Throughout the inspection, senior leaders and members of the interim advisory board demonstrated their determination to move the academy out of special measures. Their knowledge of the academy strengths and weaknesses is impressive as are their intended solutions to identified difficulties, for example to improve the quality of teaching and the progress made by all pupils.

Securing rapid but sustained improvements is understood well by senior leaders. Discussions during the monitoring inspection related not only to the current situation but their plans for the future, in order to improve attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, for example. As noted previously, senior leaders and members of the interim academy council continue to work hard and are not prepared to accept mediocre teaching which limits pupil progress.

Staff to whom the inspector spoke have positive attitudes and want to make improvements to their practice, whether they were present when the academy was placed into special measures or not. While teaching remains inconsistent

across the school, teachers welcome the additional challenge and support provided by senior leaders to improve their practice.

Members of the interim advisory board have a high profile within the school. Reports from their visits demonstrate the effectiveness of their work. Minutes from their meetings reflect the searching and detailed questioning of leaders at all levels. This helps leaders to improve their leadership and management skills. Uncertainty regarding the direction of the school as leaders plan to move to a different multi-academy trust is not helpful. Members of the interim academy council would welcome an early decision from the parties responsible.

Leaders have taken on board comments made during the previous monitoring inspection, especially to ensure that pupils' achievement and progress rise in all subjects. It also reinforces their determination to improve the quality of teaching. The academy action plan is underpinned by separate plans for English, mathematics, early years, teaching, learning and assessment and safeguarding. Deadlines and expectations of impact are identified and include actions beyond those identified at the section 5 inspection in May 2016.

There is a welcoming atmosphere in the early years classrooms and new initiatives designed to engage parents purposefully are welcomed by them. Parents bringing their children to the Nursery class enjoy the opportunity to spend a few moments helping them to write their names before lessons begin.

During the monitoring inspection the inspector checked adults' understanding and awareness of safeguarding policies and procedures. These are understood and embedded so that current statutory requirements continue to be met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Senior leaders are relentless in their pursuit of high-quality teaching. However, not all staff are improving as quickly as leaders would wish and, therefore, the progress made by pupils of all abilities is uneven in different classes.

Most teachers are setting work for different ability groups but the success and effectiveness of this is not always apparent. Some pupils need extra help to think about how to solve a problem or to be questioned appropriately to help them think through their ideas and make progress. Checking by teachers during lessons is not always done swiftly to identify any misconceptions pupils have so as to put them on the right track. At times pupils hear key words but their understanding and knowledge of them is not checked by staff so they use these words inappropriately in their work.

Pupils are expected to respond regularly in their books to comments made by teachers. In some cases they do this diligently and the improvements they are asked to make are appropriate and help pupils understand where they have gone wrong. However, too often, and this was evident in books, the checks and comments made by teachers either make no sense or are missing for several pieces of work.

In the majority of classes, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very positive; they listen carefully to instructions and to each other. In some cases, noise levels are too high and learning is adversely affected. This is because staff do not always demonstrate the skills needed to manage off-task behaviour. Mundane activities that take place in some lessons slow learning and progress because pupils spend too long doing work that does not help them practise or learn new skills.

There is still work to be done to improve the effectiveness of support staff. There is significant variability in the way they support different groups of pupils and how well they are deployed during lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Staff and pupils told the inspector that behaviour during lessons and at social times is much improved. School logs confirm that behaviour has improved. During the monitoring inspection, pupils greeted adults with a cheery 'good morning' as they arrived at school. They are happy to talk to visitors and move around the school sensibly. They are proud of their school and recognise the significant changes that have happened during the last year. The 'good to be green' system shows an increase in the number of pupils who are gaining rewards and therefore qualifying for special events. The work of the learning mentor is integral to ensuring that these improvements are working, especially with those youngsters who have difficulties managing their anti-social behaviour. These pupils are, however, a very small proportion of the school population.

Leaders have made positive links with another school in Wakefield where the pupils come from more diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds compared to those in St Botolph's. Members of the academy pupil council have visited this school and hosted a reciprocal one so that, by mixing with pupils with backgrounds different to their own, their awareness of cultural and religious differences is developing well. However, other pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain, together with the differences and similarities between religions and cultures, is less well developed. The PSHE programme is designed to promote the values of the school and these are well known to pupils. Many pupils demonstrate their understanding, e.g. of politeness and responsibility, through their daily actions.

Improving attendance continues to be a significant challenge for leaders. It is not helped by parents flouting efforts to ensure regular attendance by all pupils. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is still too high and includes a range of pupils, not just those who are disadvantaged. Senior leaders described a variety of initiatives which they plan to introduce and which are designed to reward regular attendance as they continue to improve the current situation.

Children in the early years display resilience, independence and social skills, working happily together for long periods of times.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders are aware that progress over time is inconsistent and many pupils of all abilities are not challenged appropriately so that they can make consistently good progress. Too often progress is only adequate, with few pupils making accelerated progress. However, analysis of pupils' work in books across the school indicates that there is some rapid progress especially in writing and mathematics. School data suggests that more pupils than previously will make better progress and reach standards above those expected at the end of Year 6 than has been the case previously.

Pupils are writing longer pieces of work and in different styles than formerly. It is evident that this is the case not only in their English books but also in the very well-presented topic books. These books reflect the variety of themes that pupils study through different subjects. It is, however, also evident that when pupils have been learning a particular skill, for example in English or mathematics, this is not transferred to their topic work; for example learning about bar graphs in mathematics lessons and then arranging information in a similar format when studying other subjects.

The number of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception has fallen over the past three years, with a significant difference between how well girls do compared to the national picture last year. Improvements have not impacted fully but current school data and observations during the monitoring inspection suggest that this picture is now improving. Children write more regularly than before. There are a number of opportunities inside and outside where children can write for different purposes. Analysis of their books showed that some children are making rapid progress developing this important skill.

A new method of assessing how well children are doing in the Nursery class is firmly established. Working with other schools has enabled staff to be more confident when judging how well children are doing and where extra help is needed.

External support

Leaders and classroom teachers benefit from a range of carefully chosen external support. The experience and expertise of the members of the interim advisory board is central to this so that support and challenge is given where it is needed most. The adviser from the diocese works in tandem with the interim advisory board members, monitoring the impact of the support given, and provides additional challenge when needed. Staff report that they welcome the opportunities they have to link with other schools in the vicinity, share ideas and compare how they assess pupils' work.