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Ms Cathy Godden
Headteacher
Orchard Meadow Primary School
Wesley Close
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX4 6BG

Dear Ms Godden

Special measures monitoring inspection of Orchard Meadow Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16–17 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 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 October 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 plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint NQTs.

I am copying this letter to the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dom Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, especially in Years 1 to 3, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of the standards pupils can achieve, making effective use of assessment to set tasks that challenge pupils to make good progress from different starting points
 - stretching the most able pupils so that more exceed expectations for their age
 - ensuring that teachers' feedback helps pupils to understand how to improve their work
 - training and using teaching assistants effectively so that they have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Improve behaviour, welfare and personal development by:
 - using a consistent and effective approach to promoting good behaviour and self-discipline
 - ensuring that pupils attend school regularly, in particular reducing significantly the proportion of pupils that miss school frequently, especially disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - keeping the impact of the nurture provision on improving the behaviour and well-being of targeted pupils under review
 - providing pupils with rich and varied opportunities that effectively promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - setting targets that significantly raise everybody's expectations of the progress pupils can and should make
 - reviewing how effectively reading, including phonics, is taught
 - ensuring that pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop and apply their thinking and problem-solving and writing skills.
- Improve leadership at all levels by:
 - monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' learning more rigorously and providing focused feedback, support and challenge to teachers
 - analysing outcomes for different groups of pupils, tracking their progress and taking prompt action to support those who are falling behind, particularly pupils who are disadvantaged and the most able

- developing the role of subject leaders to identify priorities and lead improvements
- providing a rich, relevant, broad and balanced curriculum.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 16 to 17 May 2017

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and subject leaders, representatives of the trust, members of the interim executive board and the school's external school improvement consultant. The inspector spoke with a group of pupils and with parents bringing their children to school. A range of documents were considered, including information about pupils' progress, the school's improvement plans, records of behaviour, the school's record of checks on staff and recent pupil attendance information.

Context

Four teachers have left the school since the inspection last October. An interim executive board is now in place.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have wasted no time in ensuring that essential improvements are underway. They demonstrate a strong ambition to improve teaching and learning and to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school's action plan is sufficiently detailed. Timescales to support swift improvements are both realistic and ambitious. Helpfully, leaders' roles, including those of members of the trust and the interim executive board, are defined clearly. Importantly, these plans have been shared promptly with staff, who, therefore, clearly understand their role in achieving whole-school improvement. Leaders have taken suitable first steps to ensure that the school becomes a better place for pupils to learn well.

An increasingly accurate new system for assessing and recording pupils' progress is supporting leaders well in their checks on the effectiveness of teaching. Furthermore, members of the interim executive board are beginning to develop the way they use this information to challenge the impact school leaders are having on driving improvement. Rightly, governors use expertise from both across the trust and from their externally appointed school improvement partner to validate the information about teaching and pupils' progress which leaders provide.

Leaders are putting in place appropriate performance management arrangements to improve teaching and are supporting newly qualified teachers well. Personalised support plans set clear targets to help staff develop their skills. Regular training sessions are helping teachers develop skills in important areas, such as making lessons more challenging and providing pupils with effective feedback. As a result, leaders' actions in training and developing staff are beginning to improve teaching and learning.

Subject leaders show encouraging ambition and share senior leaders' clear commitment to school improvement. Their honest self-evaluation is leading to rapid improvements in the way they work together to improve the curriculum. Nevertheless, their work to ensure that all pupils experience learning that is suited well to their individual needs is in the early stages of development.

Leaders have completed an effective review of pupil premium spending and put in place high-quality plans to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Importantly, both a governor and senior leader have been identified as being responsible for championing better outcomes for this group of pupils. Together, they are starting helpful work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the effective additional support they need to make rapid progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Some improvement to teaching is evident. For example, learning activities are more accurately matched to pupils' needs to help maximise the progress that they make. Teaching is beginning to take into account pupils' different starting points and is targeting more effectively than previously gaps in pupils' understanding. That said, teaching is not yet ensuring that all groups of pupils make the progress of which they are capable. The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently because leaders have not yet identified this group of learners or put in place an effective strategy to ensure that they receive the additional challenge they need to achieve their full potential.

Recent helpful training is supporting teachers improve the feedback that they provide to pupils. In the best examples, teaching now includes useful oral feedback during lessons that helps pupils reflect successfully on what they are learning. Similar improvements are emerging in the feedback that teachers provide to pupils about the work in their books, but there is much to do to ensure that this is consistently in place.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' attendance and behaviour are improving steadily. This is because the headteacher has communicated appropriately high expectations. Pupils now know the fair consequences to expect if they misbehave and, as a result, the number of incidents of poor behaviour has recently fallen. However, these high expectations of behaviour are not reflected in staff's practice. Not all staff implement the school's policy rigorously enough and more must be done to ensure that rates of poor behaviour fall further. A whole-school approach to managing behaviour is not yet established.

Effective nurturing and support is beginning to support vulnerable pupils' emotional and well-being needs effectively. Staff receive appropriate training to ensure that they have the skills to provide the tailored support some pupils need. Newly

introduced high-quality interventions are helping these pupils to begin catching up from their starting points. As a result, some pupils who have been experiencing difficulties with their behaviour are now beginning to learn successfully alongside their peers.

Leaders have put in place promising initiatives to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils are developing a growing respect for each other's differences because the headteacher provides regular assemblies to build pupils' understanding of different religions. Pupils value other assemblies that take place weekly. They are starting to draw the links between celebrating the achievements of others and the helpful whole-school values of 'respect, perseverance and belonging'.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' achievement in reading shows promising signs of early improvement. Improved teaching is securing a steady rise in the number of pupils achieving well in this area. Pupils value recent improvements to the school library and the newly introduced 'reading challenge'. These important initiatives are helping pupils to enjoy reading more and to show a greater interest in books. However, it is still too early to see fully the impact of this work on pupils' overall outcomes and achievement.

External support

The trust is now taking decisive action to support rapid school improvement. Links with a good school within the trust provide effective leadership support for leaders and good-quality professional development for teachers. Importantly, the trust has provided financial investment to develop the school's nurture provision to better support vulnerable pupils.

Governors of the interim executive board are improving their challenge and support to leaders. Their recent vital training is supporting governors well to start to monitor pupils' progress more effectively. Sensibly, they have also appointed an external school improvement consultant to help them check more thoroughly the impact school leaders' actions are having on school improvement.