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Mrs T Bunn
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bunn

Special measures monitoring inspection of Edgar Stammers Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 20–21 June 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 academy'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 November 2016.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - set work for pupils that is securely based on their prior knowledge and understanding
 - plan classroom activities which use time productively to maximise pupils' learning
 - provide pupils with the opportunity to write in a range of contexts within different subject areas
 - require pupils to apply the knowledge and understanding they have acquired in new ways.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders recognise in their planning and their allocation of resources the absolute priority of improving the quality of teaching
 - providing training and ongoing support for middle leaders to ensure that they are skilled and confident enough to fulfil their roles
 - making sure that key stage 2 teachers understand how to implement a clear school policy for the teaching of reading, and checking that they comply with it
 - developing a rich programme of teaching and learning activities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness
 - establishing a more effective two-way communication with parents so that leaders are able to harness parents' energies in improving attendance and supporting pupils' learning.
- Increase the proportion of pupils at all stages, including the early years, who attain the highest standards by identifying all those pupils with the potential to do so, and ensuring that teachers set challenging work which requires them to think deeply.

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 20 June 2017 to 21 June 2017

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other leaders, the trust's director of primary academies and the chair of the local governing body. Meetings were also held with two groups of pupils. The inspector spoke to parents at the beginning and at the end of the school day. Twenty-one responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. A range of documents were considered including the school's improvement plans, recent attendance information, notes of visits from the multi-academy trust advisers and the school's current information about pupils' progress.

Context

There have been significant staffing changes since the inspection in November 2016. The trust appointed a new headteacher from 1 January 2017. One deputy headteacher is currently on maternity leave. Three teachers have left. One of these teachers was the special needs coordinator. Supply teachers have been teaching some classes to cover staff absences. Two new teachers have been appointed. This includes a new special needs coordinator who started in April 2017. A further new teacher is due to start on 1 September 2017.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher has quickly gained an accurate picture of the challenges facing the school. She is determined to improve the quality of education and to make the school a better place for pupils to learn. This vision is shared by all of the established staff and governors. The school's improvement plan is detailed and addresses all of the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. However, the targets and milestones set in the improvement plan are not being met within the timescale set.

At the inspection in November 2016, inspectors recommended an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding. A review was undertaken in March 2017. Leaders, including governors, have failed to take the necessary actions recommended in the review. I recommend that leaders urgently do so. One of Her Majesty's Inspector's will review the action taken at the next monitoring inspection.

The headteacher has used performance management systems effectively to address some of the weakest teaching. However, inadequate teaching is still evident and too much teaching requires improvement. This is not to say that staff are not working hard; however, teaching is not yet good enough to ensure that pupils achieve well. Feedback notes following leaders' observations of lessons show that teachers receive precise messages about how to improve their teaching. Established staff are

working hard to bring about the necessary improvements. However, the instability in staffing disrupts and slows pupils' learning and staff absence means that leaders are frequently required to cover teaching in classrooms. As a result, they are unable to keep to the deadlines set in their plans to support improvements in the quality of teaching across the school. This hinders the pace of improvement. Senior leaders are currently teaching in Years 4 and 5. As a result, too much responsibility for driving improvement falls on the shoulders of the headteacher. Leaders, including the trust's director, acknowledge that continued instability in teaching staff presents uncertainty about the academy's capacity to improve.

The trust is failing to implement the improvements identified in the statement of action within the timescales set. The trust's target to significantly improve teaching and learning by Easter 2017 was not met. This delay is a barrier to improvement. There is no clear view of how this will impact on the school's readiness for removal from special measures in the given timescale. One of Her Majesty's Inspector's will evaluate the extent of improvement to ensure that targets are met during her next monitoring inspection.

The headteacher has clarified the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders. Senior leaders, including the trust's primary director, have provided training and ongoing support for middle leaders. The impact of this support varies. Not all middle leaders understand the purpose of monitoring and evaluation or how to analyse and use the information that they have gathered in order to drive improvement quickly.

The subject leader for English has introduced a new reading policy. This was an area for improvement at the last inspection. Key stage 2 teachers do not yet have a clear understanding of how to implement the policy. They are not clear about how to use the different assessment tools to check pupils' progress and plan the next steps in learning. Approaches to hearing individual pupils read vary considerably from class to class. The subject leader has not identified these weaknesses during monitoring activities. The foundations for improvement in key stage 2 reading are not secure.

There is evidence that teachers are providing pupils with opportunities to write in a range of contexts, such as topic work and science. However, systems are not in place to check that these tasks are helping pupils to master basic writing skills or achieve standards of greater depth in their writing.

The Year 6 leader has introduced a programme and resources to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness across the school. All staff are using the programme. It is too early to judge the quality of the programme or the impact on pupils' personal development and behaviour.

Two new governors, with knowledge and experience of school improvement, have joined the local governing body. This has strengthened governors' capacity to support and challenge leaders. A governors' action plan group is now established.

This group regularly meets to check the school's progress. Documentation shows that governors have an accurate and realistic picture of the academy's position. Minutes of meetings show that they raise concerns with the trust and challenge academy leaders. Governors have requested more support from the trust to strengthen the quality of teaching and stabilise staffing. This has not been forthcoming. Consequently, the quality of education is not improving quickly enough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Pupils underachieve because the teaching is not effective or consistent enough to improve pupils' attainment and progress over time. The quality and quantity of work in pupils' books, discussions held with pupils about their learning, and the school's own records of pupils' achievement confirm this.

The headteacher has introduced useful systems to check that teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are accurate. There is now a clear and accurate record of pupils' attainment in every class. Leaders have a good understanding about the proportion of pupils working at the standards expected for their age. However, in too many lessons, teachers are not using this information to suitably address gaps or misunderstandings in pupils' learning. Pupils are not required to return to work to correct mistakes or improve their understanding. As a result, pupils' underachievement has not yet been halted.

The school does not yet have a clear picture of the proportions of pupils who are working above the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This was a significant area for improvement at the last inspection. Across Years 1 to 5, evidence from pupils' books and from lessons show too few opportunities are provided to enable pupils to work at higher standards. For example, teachers are not providing enough opportunities for pupils to reason mathematically or use their mathematical knowledge to solve practical problems. Pupils are not required to apply their knowledge and understanding in new ways. As a result, they do not master their basic skills and work at higher standards or at greater depth.

There are some exceptions. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were investigating the art and culture of Mexico. They talked maturely about the influence of MC Escher's art and demonstrated a good understanding of the links between his art and mathematics. During the inspection, pupils were working independently, designing pieces of art with sophisticated symmetrical patterns and tessellations. Teachers encouraged pupils to use correct mathematical language to explain their designs. Pupils were prompted to talk clearly and systematically about their artwork. Pupils demonstrated resilience in their learning and pride in their work. They had opportunities to show creativity and imagination. At the same time, they were challenged to think and reason more deeply and solve complex geometrical problems. As a result, pupils were achieving greater depth in their understanding.

However, this happens only in lessons where teachers have high expectations and allow opportunities for pupils to think, apply and build on their existing knowledge.

Teachers' expectations in reading lessons vary from class to class. In some classes in key stage 2, the quality of work in pupils' reading workbooks is scruffy with basic errors in spelling and sentence structures left unchecked over long periods of time. In some reading lessons, time is not always used productively. Pupils are not challenged to think deeply about their reading or to practise their skills of decoding. Reading books are not well matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils become disinterested and do not make the reading progress of which they are capable.

In contrast, where the teaching of reading is strong, teachers use assessment information well. They set high expectations for the pupils and they rise to them. Pupils' reading workbooks reflect this. Pupils are expected to apply their knowledge and understanding of reading and writing to a range of different tasks. They master their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills as they respond in new ways to different kinds of reading material. Nonetheless, this is not yet common or established enough in all classes particularly in Years 3 to 5.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have taken effective action to improve communication with parents and carers about the importance of pupils attending school regularly. For example, weekly newsletters contain updates about the importance of good attendance. Attendance figures for each class are presented on the academy's website, and a team of pupil attendance ambassadors is established. They are raising the profile and importance of good attendance in all classes.

Leaders now work closely with the local authority welfare and attendance officer. She is providing additional support with pupils who are persistently absent from school. As a result of these actions, pupils' attendance rates are edging closer to last year's national average. Instances of persistent absence are reducing and the school's records show that punctuality is improving.

Behaviour, in classes and in corridors around the academy, has declined since the previous inspection. Not all staff implement the academy's behaviour policy consistently or rigorously enough. There are examples of excessive use of 'red cards', to register poor behaviour, in some classes. There is no indication that such action leads to improved behaviour. Pupils' comments include, 'Some people get red cards but they still don't change. We used to have five golden rules but some people don't know what they are now.' Not enough is being done to ensure that poor behaviour is eradicated quickly. This is a new priority for the school. One of Her Majesty's Inspector's will review behaviour and its management at the next monitoring inspection.

Supervision at breaktimes and lunchtime is vigilant and effective. Pupils say that there is always a teacher available and that any problems are quickly dealt with. The Year 6 leader has introduced a detailed programme of assemblies and special topics about fairness and respect. This work is in the early stages so its impact cannot be judged.

Outcomes for pupils

There have been no external test results since the previous inspection in November 2016.

The leader in early years has tackled key priorities with determination and skill. She ensures that all staff benefit from high-quality professional development. There is a strong team spirit and a culture of professional learning in this phase. This is having a positive impact on the youngest children's progress, including the most able. Inspection evidence and staff records show that the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year continues to increase. The accuracy of teachers' assessments has been appropriately confirmed through joint meetings with the trust and the local authority.

Phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is effectively taught in the early years and in Year 1. As a result, the proportion of pupils who have attained the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has risen year on year. In 2016, the percentage reaching this threshold was in line with the national average. However, a high proportion of pupils in Year 2, who had not attained the expected standard in 2015, were unsuccessful in the phonics re-test in 2016. The school has not effectively improved the performance of these pupils this academic year.

The school's assessment records for key stages 1 and 2 now provide an accurate picture of pupils' attainment. The standards achieved have been recently confirmed by external moderation. The school is not yet able to demonstrate evidence of pupils' progress from their different starting points over time. Leaders recognise that work in pupils' books shows that pupils' progress is slow or inadequate in those classes where teaching is undemanding or disrupted by staff changes or absences. There are few opportunities for pupils to think deeply and attain higher standards in the subjects taught, particularly in Years 1 to 5.

The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remains weak. Staff are not always clear about how best to support these pupils. As a result, they are often presented with work that is not well matched to their specific capabilities. The school has recently appointed a teacher with responsibility for this aspect of the school's work. She has rapidly identified improvement priorities and is determined to drive improvement quickly. This is a new priority for the school. One of Her Majesty's Inspector will review the quality of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities at the next monitoring inspection.

There are significant differences in the performance of disadvantaged pupils in comparison to non-disadvantaged pupils. This includes the performance of the most able disadvantaged pupils, across all subjects and in all classes. The school's records and inspection evidence show that this gap is not narrowing rapidly.

External support

Although the trust's statement of action is, on paper, fit for purpose, it is not being implemented effectively. Targets and deadlines set out in the statement of action have not been met. The impact of this on the overall timescale for the academy's removal from special measures has not been considered. The trust is not providing the necessary oversight of the school's work and performance so that the quality of education improves rapidly. The trust's director for primary academies visits the academy regularly. He has an accurate view of the academy's performance and the quality of teaching and learning. His notes of visit are detailed and identify action points for improvement. However, action points, and other plans to improve teaching and learning, have not been effective, primarily because important weaknesses are not being remedied quickly enough. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school has declined since the previous inspection. This is a new area of concern. Prior to the inspection in November, the trust was providing a good level of support for the special educational needs coordinator. This support has not continued. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities remains weak. This is now a new area of concern.

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- all adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and use the academy's behaviour policy consistently so that incidents of poor behaviour are reduced
- teachers and support staff understand how to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that these pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development.