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Mr Sean Woolley
Principal
The Hill Primary Academy
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Dear Mr Woolley

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Hill Primary Academy

Following my visit with Fiona Dixon, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18–19 July 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 strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of trustees of the Astrea Academy Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - timelines in action plans are met and improvements are then monitored rigorously to ensure they are effective
 - governors hold leaders to account for timelines and the effectiveness of improvements
 - middle leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and early years leader, have the skills and knowledge so that they are more effective in carrying out their roles
 - accurate information is gathered on pupils' attainment so that it can be used to follow pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning
 - safeguarding is more effective, including improved monitoring and successful implementation of procedures
 - a new marking policy is implemented effectively so that teachers give pupils feedback that will help them improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' achievements by ensuring that teachers:
 - use accurate information on pupils' attainment to plan their lessons so that they can identify and meet pupils' different abilities and learning needs
 - deploy extra adults more effectively to promote pupils' learning.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - a greater proportion of pupils attend school more regularly
 - teachers and more pupils follow the guidance and procedures as noted in the behaviour policy.
- Improve outcomes and ensure the welfare of pupils in the early years by ensuring that:
 - all welfare requirements are consistently met and any risks are quickly identified and addressed
 - leaders and managers in the early years are effective in identifying and prioritising actions to improve provision
 - an accurate assessment system is fully and effectively implemented and it is used to inform teaching and promote improved outcomes.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18–19 July 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal and other leaders, including the leaders for behaviour and safeguarding, English and mathematics. Both inspectors visited lessons to observe teaching, speak to pupils informally about their learning and scrutinise work in their books. Discussions were held with groups of pupils, parents, teachers and teaching assistants. Inspectors met with the chief executive officer, the executive director of education and the director of inclusion from the Astrea Academy Trust. In addition, the lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the vice-chair of trustees and met with the transition management board (TMB).

Context

A substantive principal took up post in January 2017. Leaders have remodelled the composition of the senior management team. Senior managers' roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and amended. A senior leader with responsibility for inclusion and safeguarding started to work in the school at the end of the spring term.

Seven teachers and three teaching assistants have left the school since the beginning of the current academic year. A further three teachers have resigned and will leave the school at the end of the summer term. Three new teachers and a learning mentor have started since the last inspection. Leaders have recruited five new teachers who are due to take up their posts in September.

Leaders have contracted with a private consultancy firm in order to improve pupils' attendance and reduce the number who are persistently absent.

A small number of classrooms have been temporarily decommissioned because of an issue with subsidence. Appropriate health and safety risk assessments have been put in place.

The school became part of the Reach4 Academy Trust in May 2016. The Reach4 Academy Trust has been renamed 'the Astrea Academy Trust' ('the trust') and has its own independent governance arrangements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Governance is a strength of the school. The trustees have a full understanding of the school's inherent weaknesses because The Hill Primary Academy is a standing agenda item for discussion at every meeting. As the accountable body for the 460 pupils in the school, they take their duties and responsibilities very seriously. The small TMB is led by a highly experienced national leader of governance. He asks challenging questions of senior leaders. Governors have been thwarted in their efforts to use comparative data to judge the school's progress in improving

behaviour because the school's previous records are incomplete.

The appointment of a substantive principal has provided some stability to senior leadership. He has raised teachers', teaching assistants' and pupils' expectations of behaviour. As a result, the number of incidents of poor behaviour, although still too high, is reducing. The principal and the senior management team have made increasing pupils' attendance and reducing the number who are persistently absent a priority for school improvement. Pupils' attendance has increased in nine of the 14 classes since the new principal has been appointed.

Safeguarding is much improved. The welfare requirements of the early years are now met fully. The new senior leader with responsibility for inclusion and safeguarding is an asset to the school. She has established the school's electronic systems to record safeguarding incidents fully through delivering whole-staff training. She reports trends in numbers of incidents to the principal and to the TMB. The number of bullying, racist, homophobic and behavioural incidents has fallen since the start of the spring term 2017. The inclusion and safeguarding lead identified a small number of pupils on, what the trust acknowledges to be, 'illegal and unacceptable' part-time timetables on her arrival. The inclusion leader has worked proactively with a wide-range of external agencies to ensure that pupils are safeguarded. Detailed plans are in place to make sure that all pupils have equal opportunity to study the full curriculum.

Leaders have taken timely action to eradicate the weakest teaching. They have established rigorous performance management systems and procedures for teachers. Plans are in place to appraise support staff from September 2017. The whole-school marking and feedback policy has ensured that all staff know leaders' expectations. Rigorous systems and procedures to track pupils' attainment and progress have been established. Officers from Barnsley local authority checked the early years foundation stage profile results, the end of key stage 1 teacher assessments and the Year 6 teacher assessments of writing recently. They found all to be accurate. Assessment systems and procedures across the school are improving.

New leaders for mathematics, writing, reading and spelling, punctuation and grammar are beginning to make their mark. Actions identified in their rapid improvement plans are beginning to bear fruit. For example, pupils are presenting their work with greater care in mathematics. This enables teachers to better understand pupils' reasoning and identify where they have made mistakes when solving problems. The leader with responsibility for reading has established a culture of reading in the school since taking up her responsibilities in January. She has introduced the 'remarkable reader' initiative and ensured that every pupil has a book bag, a reading planner and a reading book. As a result, more pupils read at home with their parents and carers. Fifty per cent of the pupils are reading with an adult at least five times a week. This is a huge improvement.

Leaders at all levels have contributed to the school's improvement planning. They have prioritised the school's areas for improvement correctly. However, their improvement plans do not separate clearly who is going to carry out actions, check

that they have taken place and evaluate their impact. Plans also require more numerical targets by which senior leaders and members of the TMB can measure progress precisely at specified points in the school year.

Leaders have appointed a very experienced and knowledgeable consultant coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo). The consultant SENCo has used standardised assessments to identify pupils' underlying difficulties and deliver bespoke support. In addition, she has rebuilt pupils' incomplete records and established a close working relationship with parents. The consultant SENCo has also delivered effective school-wide training about the code of practice for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving overall but remains inconsistent across the school.

Teachers now have a firmer grasp on the standards reached, and the progress made, by pupils. Teachers understand the new systems and procedures to track pupils' achievements. Overall, the recent implementation of a whole-school policy on marking and feedback is leading to pupils making more rapid progress in mathematics and writing. Teachers have found that their pupils make better progress in writing when they are given time to think about and apply the feedback they have received.

The deployment of teaching assistants has improved since the last inspection but remains inconsistent. Inspectors observed exceptional and bespoke practice in the school's nurture group. However, on some occasions in key stages 1 and 2, teaching assistants watched, rather than contributed to, pupils' learning.

Adults have very high expectations of the children in the school's Nursery. Teaching is strong. Teachers consider children's interests when planning learning activities. For example, the boys are encouraged to write using pens shaped like tools. All adults in the setting are effective role models.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are beginning to attend school more often. However, their attendance overall and the number who are persistently absent from school remain too high.

Pupils' behaviour is improving. The majority of staff act in accordance with the school's new behaviour policy. More pupils are engaged in their learning fully in lessons.

However, pupils' behaviour at lunchtime remains an issue. Leaders have staggered pupils' lunchtimes but have not ensured that lunchtime supervisors are deployed effectively. Sometimes, all the pupils from a key stage are in the dining room and lunchtime supervisors remain outdoors with no pupils to supervise. Pupils' behaviour in the dining hall is not of a high enough standard consistently. There are still

incidents of shouting, running and dropping food on the floor inappropriately.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes for children in the early years have improved markedly this year and are broadly in line with national outcomes in 2016. Over time, an increasing proportion of children are reaching age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Children make especially strong progress in the school's Nursery.

Only three quarters of pupils reach the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Although much improved from 2016, an eighth of pupils have still not reached the standard by the end of Year 2.

Outcomes at the end of key stages 1 and 2 remain low. Not enough pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are reaching and exceeding the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Generally, pupils' outcomes in mathematics are stronger than in reading and writing. There are some pockets of good progress. In mathematics, for example, over four fifths of pupils have made good progress from their individual starting points to achieve age-related expectations in Years 1, 3 and 4. Pupils have made better progress in writing in the summer term than in the previous two terms.

External support

The school has drawn heavily on the resources of the trust. For example, the director of inclusion for the trust has supported the consultant SENCo well. As a result, pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities are being identified earlier. Similarly, the trust's director for mathematics has worked alongside the school's leaders for mathematics to improve provision for the pupils.

The school has contracted with a consultancy to improve pupils' attendance. This work is beginning to result in increased attendance.

Barnsley local authority has checked on teachers' assessments at the end of all three key stages to ensure accuracy. In addition, the local authority carried out a check on the administration of the phonics screening check in Year 1 and found procedures to be applied correctly this year.

The TMB is formed mainly from trust employees. These board members, together with the chair, challenge the school to improve consistently.

Priority for further improvement

- Leaders must ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to study the full curriculum.