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Mr David Coaché
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Dear Mr Coaché

Special measures monitoring inspection of Bretforton First School

Following my visit with Sue Cameron, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 31 October – 1 November 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 July 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures
- the school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose
- the school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - sustainable leadership and teaching are urgently put in place
 - previous relationship issues, disharmony and loss of parents' trust are not allowed to continue
 - the capacity of leadership and governance is developed, by increasing the focus on teaching and learning and distributing leadership roles
 - training and support are put in place to develop the leadership of the early years and special educational needs and disabilities
 - leaders and managers work closely with parents to improve trust, confidence and pupil numbers
 - improvement plans are more detailed and sharply focused on longer-term developments
 - the latest national curriculum and assessment changes are fully developed
 - an effective monitoring and evaluation system for leaders and governors is used to help rapidly improve teaching, learning and assessment
 - effective support is provided for vulnerable pupils, including those who have special educational needs and disabilities, less able and disadvantaged pupils
 - the statutory Department for Education requirements are kept up to date and available for parents on the school's website.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and pupil outcomes by:
 - providing consistent, high-quality teaching and pupil support
 - increasing the expectations of all pupils, especially the most able, to ensure they are consistently challenged to make the progress they are capable of
 - using assessment information to target teaching and ensure the needs of all groups, including vulnerable pupils, are fully met
 - ensuring the school's marking and feedback policy is consistently followed and effective in supporting pupil progress
 - improving pupils' attitudes to learning and producing quality work
 - sustaining and utilising the improvements started in Reception and Year 1.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 31 October 2017 to 1 November 2017.

Evidence

Inspectors met with the interim headteacher and a local authority adviser (who was previously the school's acting headteacher until July 2017) to evaluate the school's actions towards the removal of special measures. Inspectors took account of the most recent review of the local authority's statement of action and plans devised by leaders for specific areas of school development.

Inspectors observed learning in every classroom. Observations were undertaken jointly with leaders. Meetings were held with leaders to discuss the school's new assessment system, the development of the curriculum, the effectiveness of safeguarding, provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the early years foundation stage.

Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the inspection and met separately with a group of older pupils. Inspectors spoke to parents at the school gate on both mornings of the inspection and reviewed responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.

A range of documents were reviewed, including performance management records, the single central record, referrals made to the local authority, attendance and behaviour analysis and assessment information.

Context

Since the last inspection, the acting headteachers (the head of a local school and a local authority adviser) have ended their support and returned to their substantive posts. A new leadership team has been established with the support of Bengeworth CE Academy. Bengeworth CE Academy plans to convert its status to a multi-academy trust and become the sponsor for Bretforton First. When this conversion takes place, Bretforton will subsequently change its designation and become an academy and part of the trust. These changes have been consulted upon and are awaiting completion. However, plans have been unavoidably delayed and the exact dates for conversion have not been finalised.

The new interim headteacher has seconded leaders from Bengeworth to support Bretforton in its development. These include professionals with specific expertise in their fields who are local leaders of education and specialist leaders of education.

The chair of the governing body has resigned and a new chair of governors has taken up post. A temporary teacher in key stage 2 and a member of support staff have left the school.

A new head of school has been recruited to lead Bretforton and is due to join the school later in the autumn term. The structure of classes and age groups remains the same.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Governors have not fully established a sustainable model of leadership and teaching within the school. Although some plans have been unavoidably delayed, there has been a lack of rigour in the handover of the school between the local authority and the new partner school. As a result, the quality of leadership and teaching is inconsistent, has not been adequately reviewed and lacks a clear strategic plan for development.

Leaders and governors have not yet brought together an evaluation of their work into one document. The new leadership team continue to refer to the local authority's statement of action. Although this document evaluates the impact of a range of actions, it does not fully take account of the wider effectiveness of the school. There is no new plan to set out the strategic vision and direction of the school in this new academic year. As a result, governors do not have sufficient oversight of the school's effectiveness.

Governors continue to make checks on the school's progress, but these checks are not focused on the precise priorities. Governors have not held leaders sufficiently to account for the development of leadership or quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This omission represents a significant gap in the strategic development of the school and its capacity to improve. Overall progress at Bretforton has therefore stalled.

Some leaders have reviewed and devised new improvement plans. However, some of these plans lack detail and are not focused on longer-term developments.

In March 2017, governors received a report which reviewed their effectiveness. This report was commissioned to establish a plan for the development of governance within the school. Limited work has been undertaken in response to this review. Governors have not set out a clear plan to respond to the recommendations. The school's website does not comply with Department for Education requirements. The website omissions were shared at the last monitoring inspection and remain incomplete. Governors are therefore not fulfilling their statutory duties.

Relationships are much more stable than at the point at which the school was judged to be inadequate. There is a sense of positivity and pride at the school. However, staff are having to manage a wave of further change. Furthermore, they have received very little feedback about their practice since the last monitoring inspection in May 2017.

Leaders with expertise from Bengeworth are addressing weaknesses in the school.

However, some new initiatives have not yet been explained or demonstrated to staff in sufficient detail. Consequently, some staff have implemented changes and others have not. Across the school, pupils experience differences in how learning is introduced. The extent to which pupils are routinely challenged also varies. Pupils' progress therefore varies across different key stages.

In the last academic year, there had been an increased focus on developing the quality of teaching and learning, and distributing leadership roles. This has not been sustained. Leaders that are new in post and are developing in their roles require greater 'hands-on' support and guidance. This support is being established but is not underpinned by a strategic plan or programme of monitoring.

Parents of pupils that are new to the school, including those that are in the early years, hold generally positive views about the work of leaders and staff. Parents are particularly pleased with how transition from local nurseries is managed. However, some parents remain dissatisfied with day-to-day communication. Parents that responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, shared mixed views about the school. A number of parents have concerns about several aspects of the school's effectiveness, including the extent to which they are informed about their child's progress and how well the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.

At the last monitoring inspection, parents fed back positively about the establishment of a group called 'Together at Bretforton'. This group was established to improve communication and keep parents well informed. The group no longer meets. The local authority did not sustain this effective strategy or ensure that it was successfully transferred to new leaders.

The curriculum continues to develop and takes account of the changes that were introduced at a national level in 2014. The school has been supported by leaders from Bengeworth to introduce new whole-school topics and planning documents. While these initiatives are engaging pupils, teachers are not yet fully confident in how to use them. Some teachers have not fully adopted new ideas. Although the curriculum is developing, teachers require more support implementing changes.

Since September 2017, the leadership team have also introduced a new assessment model. Teachers are demonstrating familiarity with how to use this system. Its use is resulting in lessons that better meet the needs of pupils. However, teachers require more support in its use and more opportunities to moderate the judgements that they make about pupils' learning.

The leadership of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities continues to improve. Leaders from Bretforton and Bengeworth have pooled their skills to devise a clear plan for improvement. The special needs leader is also receiving a high level of support. This has been well received. The school engages effectively with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are addressed. Support for disadvantaged pupils has not improved further since the last monitoring

inspection. Governors have not reviewed expenditure of additional funding from the last academic year or established a new strategy for 2017/18.

Monitoring and evaluation have stalled within the school. Previously, staff received feedback about the impact of their work approximately every three weeks. Staff have not received any formal feedback about their practice since the start of the academic year. Leaders have not devised a programme to support staff with their day-to-day teaching or to ensure that they are adequately supported and developed. Wider work has taken place to develop teachers' understanding of special needs, curriculum planning and assessment, but this must be embedded further. It is too early to establish the full impact of some training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across the school. Due to a lack of monitoring by leaders and governors, teachers' strengths and weaknesses have not been adequately addressed or built upon since the start of term.

Work in pupils' books shows that teachers' expectations are improving. However, these higher expectations are not routinely evident in day-to-day lessons or in pupils' behaviour. Occasionally, pupils' progress, particularly in key stage 2, is affected by low-level poor behaviour. Although any poor behaviour is addressed by staff, not all pupils are able to remain focused for sustained periods of time. Pupils have had to contend with many changes to staffing, leadership and the way in which they are taught.

The extent to which pupils are challenged varies across the school. Some activities remain too easy for the most able pupils. Teachers do not routinely move pupils on quickly enough to deepen their learning.

Assessment information is being used more effectively to support teachers' planning. However, teachers are not yet using this new assessment information confidently or consistently across different key stages. Teachers have not had sufficient support at this stage to ensure that they are fully familiar with new systems.

The school's marking and feedback policy is being consistently applied across all subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Overall, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. However, some pockets of low-level poor behaviour remain in key stage 2. This behaviour is having a negative impact on the progress that pupils make. Strategies are in place to meet the needs of pupils but must now be embedded.

Incidents of poor behaviour are effectively tracked and monitored following the

introduction of a new behaviour policy. Parents and outside agencies are involved at an early stage to support improvements. This approach is beginning to have a positive impact on the behaviour of some pupils.

In lessons, most pupils demonstrate a keen interest in their learning. Pupils have recently witnessed the impact of a mythical meteorite on their playground. This new approach to encouraging engagement in learning and the curriculum is having some early positive results. However, some pupils are still not being sufficiently challenged and could make more rapid progress.

Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for areas within school, such as the library. They wear their badges with pride, and one pupil told inspectors, 'We sort out books and recommend books to other children.' Pupils also enjoy being members of the 'Eco-Committee' and the 'School Games Crew'. They particularly like supporting younger pupils. One child said, 'I am most proud of being on the School Games Crew because it gives me the opportunity to help younger children.'

As a result of effective training and support, lunchtimes are more structured. Games are coordinated well by lunchtime supervisors. Pupils have a spacious outdoor environment and access to a range of equipment.

Attendance for the previous academic year is broadly in line with national averages. The school takes appropriate action to follow up any concerns with families.

Outcomes for pupils

The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years has been sustained. This is in line with national levels. Practice in the early years continues to develop. The early years leader has reviewed her work from the previous year, undertaken an analysis of recent outcomes and devised a new plan. The environment in early years also continues to develop and pupils are making at least expected rates of progress. Leaders are aware that there is scope to develop outdoor provision further.

Provisional results for 2017 indicate that a greater proportion of pupils are passing the phonics screening check in Year 1. The effective teaching of phonics has been sustained. The successful application of phonics is evident in pupils' writing.

Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 remain low. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics remains below national standards. This represents slow rates of progress given pupils' starting points. Standards are not rising quickly enough.

Pupils' books show generally positive rates of progress since the start of term. This progress remains more evident in writing and mathematics than the wider curriculum. Some pupils are not adequately challenged. Teachers are not yet

routinely adapting activities when pupils find learning either too easy or too hard.

Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are variable. While books evidence progress in some areas, teachers' skills and expertise are not yet consistently strong enough to ensure sustained rates of progress.

External support

At the first monitoring inspection, the local authority's statement of action and the school's development plan were judged fit for purpose. However, the statement of action has not been updated to take account of the actions that leaders and governors will take in the new academic year. Furthermore, leaders and governors have not established a document to fully self-evaluate their work and inform future plans.

There is a lack of strategic planning and development. The local authority's effective work has not been sustained. The management of transition to a new leadership team has not been sufficiently robust. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not been adequately monitored or developed.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- a strategic plan for school development, including the monitoring of the impact that teaching is having on learning, is urgently established.