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Karen Slater
Acting Head of School
Pinxton Kirkstead Junior School
Kirkstead Road
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Derbyshire
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Dear Mrs Slater

Special measures monitoring inspection of Pinxton Kirkstead Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 1 to 2 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 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 February 2017.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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 Derbyshire. This letter will

be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2017.

- Raise standards for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - improving rates of progress so that all pupils make at least the progress expected of them and most achieve the expected standards for their age
 - providing appropriate challenge and support for the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics, so that they achieve at the higher standards
 - providing support for disadvantaged pupils to ensure that they achieve as well as other pupils with similar starting points.
- Ensure that teaching across the school is good or better so that pupils make rapid progress by:
 - using assessment information more effectively to plan work that moves pupils on quickly in their learning
 - ensuring that pupils' targets are matched to their starting points on entry to the school and there is a clear expectation of the progress needed to achieve their targets.
- Improve the impact of leadership by:
 - using accurate assessment information and information about pupils' prior attainment more sharply to monitor pupils' progress and drive improvement rapidly
 - developing the knowledge and skills of middle leaders so that they can improve their areas of responsibility
 - setting specific improvement targets for teachers and reviewing their progress against these
 - adding information about the curriculum on the school's website so that it meets statutory requirements
 - ensuring that action plans include time-related milestones and measures of success to track progress and increase the pace of improvement.

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.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be further improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 1 November 2017 to 2 November 2017

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and met with the acting head of school, the assistant headteacher, the acting executive head of school, the leaders responsible for English and mathematics, the chair of the governing body and a group of pupils. The inspector spoke informally to parents before the start of the school day, visited seven classes and evaluated pupils' work. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The inspector considered the school's most recent assessment information. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils were also considered. The inspector also scrutinised information relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning, the external review of governance, the external review of the use of pupil premium funding and minutes from governing body meetings.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2017, there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team. A new assistant headteacher joined the school in April 2017. The headteacher resigned her post in July 2017. The deputy headteacher was appointed as acting head of school in September 2017. A national leader of education was appointed as acting executive head of school in September 2017. This was facilitated by Flying High Trust Partnership, with which the governing body is pursuing academisation. Two teachers have left the school and two new teachers have joined it.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and governors have not taken effective action since the inspection in February 2017 to improve the school quickly enough. As a result, too many pupils are not making the progress that they should.

Since September 2017, the effective partnership working of the acting head of school and acting executive headteacher has ensured a sharper direction for improvement. Nonetheless, there is insufficient urgency and drive from senior leaders in tackling the areas for improvement. Leaders are unable to convey the urgency of the improvements needed. There is inconsistent implementation by staff of agreed actions. This is because senior leaders are not checking robustly enough whether actions which have been agreed are happening in all classes. The learning deficiencies are deep rooted and, despite some successes, there remains significant work to do.

The school improvement plan does not identify who will monitor the impact of each action, does not identify clearly enough how success will be measured and does not identify interim milestones to enable governors to check progress at regular

intervals. As a result, leaders have not secured the improvements that are urgently required.

Leaders do not understand well enough that the purpose of checking the work of teachers is to identify what training and support teachers need to improve their practice. The procedures to monitor and evaluate teaching have been superficial. Consequently, they have resulted in little improvement. Too much of the teaching remains poor. Frequently, pupils are set work which does not sufficiently challenge them to make good progress. The most recent teacher assessments show that a significant proportion of pupils are not achieving well.

Since the previous inspection, the school's procedures for managing the performance of teachers have had little impact on improving teaching across the school. Since September 2017, procedures have been reviewed and are now being implemented with more rigour and urgency. It is too soon to judge the impact this is making.

The review of the management of the pupil premium has taken place. An action plan has been produced in response to this. Currently, it is not apparent whether this is having any impact.

Middle leaders have been provided with some helpful training and support. The assistant headteacher is providing highly effective support to less-experienced subject leaders. However, subject leaders for English and mathematics have not been given sufficient time to audit their areas of responsibility, devise action plans or undertake a range of monitoring. They do not have a clear overview of the quality of teaching, learning and outcomes across the school. As a result, they are not making a strong enough impact on improving progress and raising standards.

Following the review of governance, governors have been too slow to develop their role. For example, governors are not challenging leaders with enough rigour on the improvements that should be made to teaching and learning. The chair of the governing body is highly committed but recognises that a great deal of work is still to be done.

The information on the school website does not yet meet the requirements set out by the government. The inspection in February 2017 identified that it does not provide parents with the required information about the school's curriculum. This needs to be addressed swiftly, so that parents have access to the correct information.

Safeguarding documents were checked during the monitoring visit and meet current requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders and teachers do not have high enough expectations of what constitutes good teaching. There are substantial differences in the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, outcomes for pupils are not improving fast enough.

Teaching is weak in Years 3 and 4 and is sometimes inadequate. This is because teachers do not always use the information gained from assessment to help them pitch the lessons correctly. As a result, sometimes the work is either too hard or too easy for different groups and individuals. Teachers do not always make clear links for pupils between the activity they are doing and why they are doing it. Consequently, not all pupils are making progress at the rate they should.

Where teaching is strongest, teachers are setting high expectations and there is a close match between the teacher's planning and information about what precisely a pupil needs to do to improve. As a result, pupils are engaged in purposeful and productive learning. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils relished the challenge to write opening sentences to create feeling. One pupil wrote, 'breathing heavily, with eyes wide open, she dragged her feet along the cobbled path'. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, the classroom was buzzing with learning as pupils confidently used a new strategy to solve problems. No learning opportunity was missed. The teacher used skilful questioning to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. As a result, pupils made accelerated progress.

There is similar variation in the use of the school's marking policy. Scrutiny of pupils' books during this inspection showed that in Years 3 and 4, teachers are not applying the policy consistently and often fail to correct errors. Senior leaders know that they need to ensure consistent implementation of agreed policies through more robust scrutiny of pupils' books.

The significant variations in teaching are hindering pupils' progress over time in all classes. Pupils have too much catch-up to do in Years 5 and 6 because of the significant weaknesses in teaching in Years 3 and 4. Consequently, pupils are not making the progress that they should.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Since the inspection in February 2017, pupils' good personal development, behaviour and welfare has been maintained.

Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. They greet each other, staff and visitors pleasantly and respectfully. Pupils behave extremely well around school, at playtimes and in the dining hall. Pupils are eager to please and generally try their best. However, in lessons where teaching is less than good, pupils' attitudes understandably deteriorate and they often lose their focus on learning. In the lessons where teachers have higher expectations, pupils' levels of engagement are

good and they show a keen enthusiasm for learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Teachers do not set consistently high enough expectations. Many pupils are capable of achieving higher standards and making faster progress. The quality of work and the progress made by pupils vary depending on which class they are in. Pupils' work, learning and progress over time in too many classes are too slow because teaching is not ambitious enough. The quality of some pupils' work as seen in their books is weak. Teachers' assessments are sometimes too generous.

The school has begun to put procedures in place to tackle underachievement, but as yet, they are not consistently applied. Until very recently, teachers have not been held rigorously to account for the progress pupils are making. Consequently, they are not having a strong enough impact on raising achievement. The progress pupils made in lessons during the monitoring visit was inconsistent.

Leaders have rightly recognised the need to rapidly improve pupils' basic reading skills. A whole-school approach to reading has been introduced. Guided reading sessions take place every morning, parents are volunteering to listen to pupils read and pupils are being encouraged to read more challenging texts independently. As a result, things are improving. Pupils are reading with greater fluency and show a sound grasp of the texts they are reading. This shows the better progress they have made since the start of the year.

A new method of assessing and tracking pupils' progress is being introduced. The first assessment point at 10 weeks has not yet been reached. Consequently, it is not yet possible to evaluate the difference it is making.

The presentation of pupils' work is sometimes messy and handwriting is untidy. Older pupils are showing greater pride in their work and taking more care to present their work neatly.

External support

The local authority has not kept an effective check on the work of school leaders to make improvements. No representative from the local authority has visited the school since July 2017.

Flying High Trust Partnership brokered the support of a national leader of education to support the school as acting executive headteacher, with effect from 1 September 2017. This was discussed and agreed with the local authority in anticipation of academy conversion early in the autumn term. However, an early conversion was not realised and there is still no confirmed date for this. The school remains a local authority maintained school.

The national leader of education has provided effective support for the acting head of school with improving performance management, reviewing the school's assessment procedures and introducing a whole-school approach to reading. However, it has not resulted in school leaders and staff appreciating that they must have higher expectations of teaching and learning.

The local authority action plan details a wide range of support for the school. However, the school has received very little of this. The local authority's school improvement officers have not been vigilant enough to recognise the deep-rooted learning deficiencies and the decline in the school's effectiveness. They have not provided the necessary training and support to develop the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress. The local authority's target of 75% good or better teaching by July 2017 has been missed. No local-authority-led review meetings have taken place this term with senior leaders. As a result, the school is not able to demonstrate improvements at a rate that would enable special measures to be removed within the required timescale.