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Mrs H Heap
Interim Headteacher
Rounds Green Primary School
Brades Road
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West Midlands
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Dear Mrs Heap

Special measures monitoring inspection of Rounds Green Primary School

Following my visit with Jane Spilsbury, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Sian Williams, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 14– 15 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 November 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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection.

Annex

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

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are effective by:
 - adhering closely to the school’s safeguarding policy
 - assessing risks regularly and taking immediate action on potential or identified shortcomings
 - teaching pupils to keep safe from risks such as child exploitation and radicalisation.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that middle leaders effectively lead on their subjects or areas so that pupils achieve appropriately for their age
 - monitoring pupils’ progress, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and taking action so that no pupil falls behind
 - ensuring that governors discharge their core statutory functions effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - securing the accuracy of teachers’ assessments to gain a precise view of pupils’ progress
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons well, meet the needs of different pupils and check their understanding
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply, develop and refine their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare, including pupils’ attendance, by:
 - ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time at the start of the school day
 - eradicating low-level disruption in lessons, so that pupils are not distracted and their learning is not interrupted
 - dealing with bullying concerns effectively and in a timely manner.
- Improve the provision in early years by:
 - ensuring that leaders have high expectations of what children should know and do, so that children systematically develop the skills they need in preparation for their next stage of education
 - assessing all risks and taking the necessary action to ensure that children learn safely
 - planning complementary activities so that children do not interrupt others who

need to listen carefully or work quietly

- ensuring that resources effectively support children’s learning and inspire their interest, for example by choosing appropriate books for reading sessions
- ensuring that parents contribute to staff’s knowledge about what children know and can do and keeping parents informed so that they know how to support their children at home.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 14 November 2017 to 15 November 2017

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to a range of other leaders and staff, and to pupils informally and formally. Inspectors also observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects across the whole school. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Pupils' behaviour was observed at social times, in lessons and as they moved around the school site.

Various documents were scrutinised including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, information about teachers' performance management and your records that evaluate the quality of teaching. You shared with me the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. We discussed the national test results and assessments undertaken by pupils in 2016 and 2017. I also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the previous interim headteacher has left the school. The new interim headteacher started in January 2017. Senior and middle leaders' roles have been clearly defined. A new early years leader was appointed in September 2017. More permanent teachers have been secured, and there is now just one temporary teacher. A family support worker was also appointed in January 2017. The chair of governors is a national leader of governance and was appointed just prior to the previous inspection. He has added capacity to the governing body by supporting the appointment of several new members. There is a new local authority adviser supporting the school, who began working with the school in September 2017. At this present time, an academy conversion has been proposed but has not taken place.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher has created a sense of purpose and teamwork among pupils, staff and parents. She has worked successfully with other leaders and governors to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Parents and staff fully support the ambition and high expectations that the interim headteacher provides. Comments from parents include, 'The interim headteacher is brilliant. She is highly visible', and 'Communication is much better and I am involved in my child's learning more.'

The interim headteacher and chair of governors quickly identified that staffing, safeguarding and the behaviour of pupils needed the most urgent action. They have brought stability by appointing permanent staff and adding greater leadership capacity across the school. Safeguarding procedures are now very well organised and pupils are safe. Leaders and staff have improved pupils' behaviour in classrooms, which supports the better teaching and improving outcomes for pupils. Leaders have achieved improvements in spite of significant financial challenges. Leaders and governors use accurate self-evaluation to identify key actions that need to take place. Their improvement plan is precise and identifies relevant actions to address.

Senior and middle leaders now have more purpose and capacity. Their roles are clearly defined and they systematically evaluate the success of their action plans. Consequently, those leaders responsible for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, early years, phonics and SEN have successfully addressed some of the key urgent priorities. However, there is not enough current leadership capacity to improve the consistency of teaching in key stage 2. The interim headteacher, chair of governors and local authority recognise this and are working towards securing additional high-quality leadership support.

The interim headteacher provides a positive blend of support, development and challenge to staff. One staff member explained, 'People feel trusted, valued and empowered.' Staff's performance management focuses on their career development, as well as on how they can contribute to specific areas of weakness in the school. Leaders arrange regular high-quality training to help staff improve. For example, staff's subject knowledge for teaching handwriting is more effective and, as a result, the quality of pupils' handwriting has improved.

Leaders have taken significant and successful action to improve the accuracy of assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress, although there is still more to do. Teachers' assessments are now more reliable and leaders use this information to provide effective analysis of trends in pupils' performance. Leaders and teachers work productively in pupil progress meetings to plan effective support to help pupils catch up. However, teachers' assessments in Year 6 are not accurate enough in relation to the challenging end-of-year test expectations in mathematics and reading. As a result, leaders do not have a precise awareness of pupils who are at risk of not achieving the expected and higher standards.

Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress have been appropriate since the previous inspection. Leaders regularly look at books to ensure that staff are implementing agreed policies and that pupils are progressing well in their learning. Teachers receive effective feedback from these book looks. Leaders have not yet had the time to provide consistent high-quality follow-up support after they observe classroom teaching. As a result, some of the weaker teaching in the school is not improving as quickly as it needs to.

The review of the use and impact of the pupil premium funding has been completed. Leaders have successfully implemented recommendations from the report. The plan for the allocation of funding for the academic year 2017/18 is precise and has clear success criteria linked to outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' evaluation of the plan for last academic year is very effective and shows where actions were successful or require improvement. Leaders are able to prove how their thoughtful strategies are having a clear impact for disadvantaged pupils. For example, additional support to develop pupils' speech and language has been highly successful.

The chair of governors provides expert support to the governing body and the interim headteacher. He has recruited several new governors with skills and knowledge to improve the governing body's capacity. The chair carries out visits into school with other governors to model what to look for and how to be a strategic governor. Consequently, governors' skills and the challenge they provide continues to improve.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding pupils is at the heart of the school's work. The designated leaders for safeguarding and the family support worker are tenacious. They follow up concerns thoroughly and instigate appropriate support for families. Leaders have arranged regular training for staff, which has secured their understanding of the different types of abuse and how they must report their concerns. Staff are knowledgeable about risks, such as that of female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Leaders provide good-quality training for staff and have an effective risk assessment for radicalisation. As a result, staff understand the warning signs and can keep pupils safe from such risks. However, some older pupils do not have a well-developed understanding of extremism. Leaders and staff now teach safety across the curriculum effectively. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils told inspectors how they would block a person online and then tell a trusted adult, if they were concerned about something on the internet. Risk assessments, such as those of fire safety, educational trips and outdoor play equipment, are effective and reviewed regularly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching has improved most noticeably in the early years and in key stage 1 since the last inspection. Teaching in key stage 2 has improved but is variable. Some teachers do not use accurate subject knowledge to show pupils how to produce high-quality work or how to solve a particular problem. As a result, some pupils do not produce work of a high enough quality and misconceptions are not addressed.

Teachers' assessments are now far more accurate. Leaders have supported teachers to have a deeper understanding of the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff regularly moderate pupils' work in order to add confidence to their judgements. Teachers use their knowledge of assessment to plan work that is increasingly well matched to pupils' needs. However, pupils who

have the capability of reaching the higher standards are not given a consistently high level of challenge. Teachers' use of assessment during lessons is not consistent. In the strongest teaching, teachers adapt their practice during a lesson by supporting those pupils finding it hard or putting in place more challenge for those pupils finding the work easy. However, in some lessons, teachers do not adapt activities to meet pupils' needs, and their progress slows.

Pupils are reading a greater range of books on a more regular basis. Leaders and staff have raised the profile of reading so that pupils recognise its importance. Phonics teaching is now more precise, which is helping pupils to decode tricky words and access a range of books. Teachers have also improved the provision for reading comprehension, so that pupils demonstrate a better understanding of the texts that they read. Leaders' wide-ranging reading strategies enable pupils to acquire more language. As a result, pupils' writing is gradually developing and their vocabulary choices are becoming more sophisticated. However, leaders recognise that pupils' progress in writing is not as strong as it is in reading.

Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to practise written calculations for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Most pupils have developed appropriate mental strategies to support their written calculation. However, due to teachers' inconsistent subject knowledge in mathematics, some pupils do not develop a deep understanding of important mathematical ideas. For example, during the inspection, some pupils were confused about their learning of fractions and they did not have their misconceptions addressed suitably.

The quality of teaching and provision in the early years has improved significantly. Leaders and staff are a cohesive and purposeful team. They have an effective understanding of children's individual needs and use this to plan challenging learning activities for children. Children are well behaved and enthusiastic and are making effective progress. During the inspection, children excitedly chose a writing activity and demonstrated that they could come up with descriptive words, phrases and sentences to describe their leaf. The early years leader has worked hard to ensure that assessment is both accurate and used well by staff. Staff make regular observations and assessments in children's books, to demonstrate progress. Parents appreciate the communication from staff in the early years and feel more involved in their children's learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have put into place an effective new system for managing pupils' behaviour. Staff apply the rewards and sanctions consistently, and pupils' behaviour in class is showing considerable improvement since the last inspection. The number of fixed-term exclusions are relatively low and decreasing over time. Pupils love the 'good to be green' system and are motivated to behave well. They enjoy free-choice activities in 'golden time' and winning house points for their team. Pupils, parents and staff are unanimous in their view that behaviour has improved across the

school. However, staff are not as consistent at applying the behaviour policy during social times and there is a lack of purposeful activities for pupils. As a result, behaviour at social times is not as positive as it is in the classroom.

Leaders analyse behaviour incidents and use the information to put in place additional support for pupils who have complex needs. This information enables leaders to know whether behaviour incidents have reduced or increased each term. Leaders are not able to analyse behaviour of different groups or trends of when incidents are happening. Leaders have rightly identified that addressing this will further develop the analysis of behaviour, particularly for incidents that are occurring at social times. Incidents in relation to bullying or racism are taken very seriously. Leaders log incidents and follow them up thoroughly. Pupils and parents feel that bullying incidents are rare and that leaders are quick to address issues before they escalate.

Pupils are now provided with a wide range of additional responsibilities, which impact well on their personal development. Some older pupils are prefects and are supportive role models for younger pupils in school. Members of the school council have planned the anti-bullying week. Several pupils have formed a steering group for 'rights respecting schools' to debate which rights should be focused on.

Leaders monitor and follow up attendance issues thoroughly. As a result, attendance is improving across the school. In the academic year 2016/17, it rose by half a percent. Pupils' attendance since September has increased further still. The only group whose attendance has not increased are those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Despite leaders best efforts, late arrivals at the start of the school day remain an issue. Some parents are still arriving late, which causes disruption for pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Improvements in the quality of teaching are gradually starting to have an impact on outcomes for pupils. In 2017, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress and attainment in reading and mathematics improved from the previous year. Leaders' assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards for reading is also improving in other year groups. Writing and mathematics are not improving as quickly, especially in key stage 2. Some pupils have significant gaps in their learning in these subjects because of previously inadequate teaching.

In 2017, at the end of key stage 1, standards appeared to decline from the previous year. However, there is convincing evidence to show that this is not the case and previous key stage 1 assessments in the school were inaccurate. This will have an impact on the school's key stage 2 published progress measures in the future, because they are based on an inflated measure of pupils' key stage 1 prior attainment. The interim headteacher has worked with staff to ensure that the 2017

end of key stage 1 assessments are now accurate.

The performance of different groups varies. The proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards is low because the most able pupils have received previously weak teaching. They are also not provided with consistent challenge in lessons. Disadvantaged pupils are catching up with other pupils in key stage 1 but are not doing as well in key stage 2, apart from in reading. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not achieving well enough by the end of key stage 2 because the historic support for them has been weak. However, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has worked with staff to put in place precise additional support to meet pupils' needs. This support is having an impact and starting to accelerate their progress.

External support

The quality of support provided by the local authority varies. For example, the support for mathematics did not help leaders improve mathematics teaching. There has been higher-quality input for phonics, which has helped the school to improve phonics teaching considerably. The local authority has also brokered the involvement of the national leader for governance and the early years leader, both of whom have contributed to recent improvements. The new school improvement adviser has worked with the school since September 2017. She has a good understanding of where additional support for teaching and leadership is required. She is committed to working with the interim headteacher to develop leadership capacity and improve teaching in key stage 2.

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

Yours sincerely

Matt Meckin

Her Majesty's Inspector