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22 December 2017

Chris Gibbon  
Head of School  
Hillocks Primary and Nursery School  
Unwin Road  
Sutton-in-Ashfield  
Nottinghamshire  
NG17 4ND

Dear Ms Gibbon

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Hillocks Primary and Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 12–13 December 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 March 2017.

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 newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive

officer of the Diverse Academy Learning Partnership multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.**

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders' plans for improvement are fully evaluated so that governors can hold leaders to account and no opportunities for improvement are missed
  - leaders make full use of the information provided by the new assessment system to ensure that pupils of all abilities make the progress of which they are capable across a range of subjects
  - leaders with responsibility for subjects other than English and mathematics fully undertake their roles and responsibilities so that they can improve the quality of teaching and outcomes in their subjects
  - leaders analyse more closely the impact of the pupil premium funding on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
  - leaders analyse carefully the impact of the primary sport funding
  - all governors are sufficiently skilled to hold leaders to account sharply for the impact of the work that they do.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to improve rapidly outcomes for pupils by ensuring that teachers:
  - plan more closely the next steps in learning for pupils so that pupils of all abilities can excel
  - ensure that teaching assistants' time is well used to improve pupils' progress
  - insist that pupils present their work as neatly as they can
  - provide pupils with opportunities to write at length across the curriculum, insisting that pupils sustain the standard teachers expect in English lessons
  - develop pupils' mathematical reasoning skills more deeply
  - intervene promptly, in a range of subjects, to move pupils on to more challenging work as soon as they are ready to do so.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - taking effective steps to reduce persistent absence and improve pupils' rates of attendance and punctuality
  - ensuring that lessons are sufficiently engaging and challenging so that low-level disruption is eradicated.

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 improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 December 2017 to 13 December 2017**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the head of school, the acting deputy headteacher, and subject leaders for English, mathematics and physical education (PE), as well as a number of other teachers and teaching assistants. The inspector met the chair of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The inspector also spoke with both the former and the new executive headteachers. He met with the executive principal and primary lead for the Diverse Academy Learning Partnership (DALP), the multi-academy trust the school is aiming to join later this academic year. He held a telephone conversation with the consultant conducting an external review of governance. The inspector met with some parents and pupils. He observed teaching in all year groups with the head of school. In total, they observed learning in 10 lessons. The inspector scrutinised pupils' work and checked that the school's website complies with national guidance on what schools should publish. He examined the school's single central record, and checked that staff were well trained in safeguarding and that they knew how to report any concerns they might have. The inspector also evaluated the school's self-evaluation documentation, along with the action plan developed since the previous inspection. He scrutinised the planning of lessons by teachers in different year groups.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, a number of changes to the school's leadership have taken place. The headteacher is currently on secondment and the deputy headteacher has become the head of school. The school's assistant headteacher is the new acting deputy headteacher. Another headteacher, who was supporting the school at the time of the inspection, became the executive headteacher from the start of April 2017. The school has received an academy order from the Department of Education. A new executive headteacher is working with the school two days a week to ensure that the momentum of improvement continues. He is employed through the DALP multi-academy trust.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leaders have written a development plan that is helping the school to move forwards. It includes actions to improve the overall quality of teaching in order to eradicate weaknesses, as well as ensuring that, for example, leaders check the achievement of pupils more effectively. Leaders have made clear on the plan which actions have taken place and which ones are due to occur next, as well as any that have not yet occurred as planned, or had the impact leaders have intended. Leaders recognise that they need to adjust the action plan so that it is more precise, in all instances, as to who will monitor each action, how and when. The multi-academy trust has recently given leaders a different format for action planning. This format

will enable leaders to clarify actions, and monitoring arrangements, more effectively.

Senior and subject leaders have checked that all staff can assess pupils' achievements accurately. The local authority has recently moderated pupils' work at the end of all key stages. Leaders have organised a number of training sessions to help those colleagues who are less skilled in making appropriate judgements about each child. As a result, teachers are now able to decide whether a pupil is on track to be working at the level typically expected for their age, or is likely to reach a greater depth of understanding. Teachers record this information on the school's assessment system. Leaders then use this information to analyse which different year groups are making better progress, and where teaching and the curriculum need to be adjusted if pupils are not making the gains they should. Leaders and staff are meeting together to then discuss how they will make the necessary changes. Leaders are now giving information about outcomes to the data committee of the governing body so they can hold leaders to account.

While the leaders of English and mathematics remain in post, new leaders have been appointed for many other subjects. The head of school has arranged training in order to develop their understanding of their roles, so that standards rise. To accompany this, she has insisted that subject leaders have a target regarding their leadership as part of their appraisal objectives. These leaders are now scrutinising pupils' work so they can see the progress that pupils are making in these subjects and meeting with pupils to discover any specific difficulties they face when learning. Subject leaders plan to use this information to gain a clear view of the strengths of teaching in their subject and to present a report to senior leaders and governors. This report will also include data about pupils' progress in these subjects, using data from the school's assessment system, and proposals to strengthen teaching, or adjust the curriculum, where needed.

The pupil premium review has begun and is due to be concluded very shortly. In the meantime, leaders have wasted no time in appointing a teacher to be the 'pupil premium champion' and check that this money is being spent effectively. This teacher has visited another local school to meet a colleague who is in an identical role, and a specialist leader of education. This has helped the teacher at Hillocks to reach a better understanding of how to monitor the provision for all disadvantaged pupils. She knows how the funding is used, along with the subjects and year groups where pupils have the smallest and largest attainment gaps. Where pupils did not make sufficient progress last year, leaders are beginning to ensure that provision is adjusted so that pupils catch up. For example, last year, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils in Year 3 who made accelerated progress was too small, particularly in mathematics. Recent school information shows that the proportion of these pupils who are now on track to reach the expectations for their age in this subject has increased from 39% to 52% this term. School data also shows a doubling of those expected to reach at least the combined standard for this cohort. Pupils' exercise books show that attainment is now rising for disadvantaged pupils in

most areas across key stage 2. Leaders recognise they now need to focus upon the spending of the pupil premium in key stage 1, and improve its effectiveness. This is because smaller proportions of disadvantaged children in Years 1 and 2 are currently on track to reach the expectations for their ages, particularly in reading and writing. Leaders have placed detailed and up-to-date information about the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils in each year group on the school website.

The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is being used well to increase both participation and enjoyment of these aspects. One of the two leaders for this subject teaches PE in most classes across key stage 2. He ensures that colleagues watch him do this, which is helping them to improve their confidence. The school has also purchased resources to help raise the quality of teaching in PE. In addition, leaders have organised a number of after-school clubs, such as taekwondo, football and dance, which pupils say they enjoy. Almost a quarter of pupils in key stage 2 are benefiting from these. More than one in three pupils in key stage 2 have also participated this term in a wide range of inter-school competitions in sports, such as indoor athletics, cross-country and indoor rowing. Leaders are careful to ensure that children of all groups can take part, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The subject leaders for PE are passing information about the effectiveness of the spending of the PE and sport premium on to the head of school. Leaders plan to continue to check this information so that governors will be able to see precisely how far participation of pupils in sport is improving over time.

The review of governance has been commissioned by the local authority on behalf of the school, and is expected to be finished by the end of this term. In the meantime, the experienced chair of governors is ensuring that new governors have had training from the local authority in order to help them understand their role. For any areas where this training has not given them sufficient confidence, she has met with them to provide further support. The governing body has received useful information about, for example, the achievement of all pupils and the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They are beginning to hold leaders to account more effectively for the decisions they make and where pupils do not make sufficient gains in their learning. The chair of the governing body understands fully the need for all governors to have sufficient knowledge, confidence and understanding of their strategic role so that they can ensure that pupils can have a good education.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The subject leaders for English and mathematics have helped their colleagues to improve their skills in planning effective sequences of learning for pupils. These leaders are checking that these plans make clear the next steps that will be taught. Teachers decide these based on what pupils have learned at the end of a lesson. Leaders have sensibly focused their attention this term on planning across key stage 1, because they were aware that it was less consistent last year compared to other areas of the school. However, because of additional training by leaders across the

school, planning has improved both here and in other year groups too. The impact of this can be seen in pupils' work. For example, teachers taught a child in the Reception Year to make a sequence of two alternating colours. Her learning journal showed that once she could do this, teachers then added further criteria, so that she learned to complete a more complex pattern using yellow rectangles and blue squares.

Leaders also ensure that teachers are planning work that better meets the needs of pupils of different abilities. They give the most able pupils increasingly different work to that given to pupils of typical ability. For instance, in Year 5, pupils were calculating the perimeter and area of complex shapes. However, the teacher asked the most able pupils to solve a highly challenging problem, with many calculations that they needed to solve systematically in order to arrive at the final answer. The impact of teaching assistants' support for pupils who need to catch up has considerably improved. This is because, following a review of their deployment by senior leaders, complemented with additional training, they now promote independence of the pupils they work with, asking them better questions that both make pupils think and develop their confidence. The inspector saw many instances of this during his visit, with, for example, a teaching assistant in a Year 3 and 4 class helping a child to understand why  $7 \times 5$  and  $5 \times 7$  must both equal 35. Pupils the inspector met told him that they did not mind receiving this support, because it helped them to understand things they found tricky.

Pupils' exercise books show they are completing their work with a greater sense of pride across all subjects, in line with the school's policy. Pupils know how to present their work because teachers have produced clear guidelines for this which are on the inside cover of exercise books. This reminds pupils that, for example, if they make an error, they must cross it out neatly with a single line. Pupils the inspector met told him that it was important for them to write neatly and that teachers would not allow them to hand in messy work. They explained to him how they like receiving the certificates staff give them for neat work, and that this helps them to try hard.

Workbooks the inspector scrutinised alongside the acting deputy headteacher and the executive headteacher show that teachers are planning more opportunities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 1 have recently written about Remembrance Day, Judaism, Hinduism, and their visit to see 'Jack and The Beanstalk' at the theatre. Teachers also ensure that they maintain their expectations of what pupils should produce, regardless of the subject matter they are writing about. Leaders recognise, however, that not all teachers are giving pupils as many opportunities to write at greater length as they could.

The school's most recent results for mathematics show that teaching is improving most in this subject: 2017 results in key stage 1 showed a considerable increase in both the proportions achieving the standard expected for their age, and at a greater depth of understanding. By the end of key stage 2, a higher proportion than the

national average achieved the expectations for their age in mathematics. The progress these pupils made was in the top 20% of all schools in England. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is increasingly strong because, as well as developing a secure grasp of number, staff ensure that they develop pupils' mathematical skills effectively. Pupils' books show consistently that teachers not only give pupils sufficient opportunities to solve real-life word-based problems, but they also frequently ask pupils to explain and justify their answers. This is helping pupils to become confident in mathematics at an early age, and to be able to apply their skills across the mathematics curriculum.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Leaders are making clear to all pupils and their families the need for regular, punctual attendance. The 'attendance newsletter', text messages and other communications give important messages about the need for all pupils to come to school promptly each morning unless there are compelling and exceptional reasons. The head of school is regularly visible at the school gates each morning, thanking parents who bring their children to school on time. She also challenges and supports those families whose children do not attend regularly enough. Leaders have instructed teachers to raise at parents' evenings the issue of attendance with any family whose child's absence is greater than 3%. Pupils the inspector met told him how much they enjoy receiving certificates for regular attendance. Because of the determination of leaders, overall attendance, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is slowly improving. However, it remains below the national average. School monitoring shows that lateness has reduced, and is now the equivalent of around one child in a hundred. Leaders know that persistent absence is highest for children in the early years. They are determined to improve attendance here so that all children can access their full entitlement to education.

Leaders' own monitoring of lessons shows that, because of a more engaging curriculum, instances of low-level disruption have reduced and are now infrequent. This was confirmed by lessons the inspector saw across all year groups. In almost all instances, pupils were paying close attention to the teacher and support staff, cooperating well, following instructions and listening appropriately. On the small number of occasions where a pupil disengaged, adults quickly attended to it so that the pupil paid attention again. Pupils the inspector met told him that they enjoyed their lessons and, most of the time, found them challenging.

### **External support**

Since the last inspection, the local authority has visited the school on a number of occasions and, as a result, have written detailed reports for the governing body on the school's improving provision and pupils' outcomes. Reports have included progress and attainment data for pupils overall, and for disadvantaged pupils, the most able, and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This information has allowed the governing body to see what progress is being made against the key



areas for improvement, as well as the priorities for immediate action. The local authority has also brokered support from the previous executive headteacher. They have worked with the multi-academy trust to secure a continuation of leadership with the appointment of a new executive headteacher. They are committed to continuing their support of the school until it becomes an academy.