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20 December 2017

Mrs T Bunn
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bunn

Special measures monitoring inspection of Edgar Stammers Primary Academy

Following my visit with John Bates and Kerrise James, Ofsted Inspectors, to your academy on 5 to 6 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local academy board, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - set work for pupils that is securely based on their prior knowledge and understanding
 - plan classroom activities which use time productively to maximise pupils' learning
 - provide pupils with the opportunity to write in a range of contexts within different subject areas
 - require pupils to apply the knowledge and understanding they have acquired in new ways.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders recognise in their planning and their allocation of resources the absolute priority of improving the quality of teaching
 - providing training and ongoing support for middle leaders to ensure that they are skilled and confident enough to fulfil their roles
 - making sure that key stage 2 teachers understand how to implement a clear school policy for the teaching of reading, and checking that they comply with it
 - developing a rich programme of teaching and activities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness
 - establishing a more effective two-way communication with parents so that leaders are able to harness parents' energies in improving attendance and supporting pupils' learning.

- Increase the proportions of pupils at all stages, including the early years, who attain the highest standards by identifying all those pupils with the potential to do so, and ensuring that teachers set challenging work which requires them to think deeply.

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.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 5 December 2017 to 6 December 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other leaders, including a local leader of education who is now working with the school. Her Majesty's Inspector met with the trust's director of primary academies and the chair of the local governing body. Meetings were also held with two groups of pupils. Her Majesty's Inspector spoke to parents at the end of the school day and joined a parent meeting led by the teacher with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. A range of documents were considered, including the school's improvement plans, notes of visits from the multi-academy trust advisers and the school's current information about pupils' progress.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a local leader of education has started working with the school for three days a week. One new teacher joined the school in September. One former temporary teacher was appointed on a permanent basis from September. One teacher has left. The deputy headteacher has returned following maternity leave. The assistant headteacher has started maternity leave. A long-term supply teacher has been appointed to cover the assistant headteacher's duties.

This monitoring inspection focused particularly on pupils' behaviour and how well the school meets the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last monitoring inspection, you have established an effective working partnership with a local leader of education from Featherstone Academy. Experienced staff from Featherstone are partnered with leaders and teachers at Edgar Stammers. This has increased the capacity of the leadership team and added new energy and drive to improve the quality of teaching. There is a climate of professional learning and pride in the school. Staff morale is high.

Intensive programmes of support are in place for some teachers. These programmes include regular joint planning and team teaching with the local leader of education and staff from the partner school. This has led to some improvements in the quality of teaching. However, this is not consistently the case across all classes. Additionally, in Years 1 to 4, leaders are still managing some changes in staffing.

Much work has been undertaken to improve the impact of middle leaders. External training and support is well tailored to their needs and areas of responsibility. They

regularly visit Featherstone Academy to learn from effective leadership activities such as focused checks on pupils' workbooks and classroom visits. They are clear about their accountabilities for driving improvements. There are signs that they are beginning to develop their skills. However, senior leaders recognise that they need to underpin this work with a full and strategic programme of monitoring and a timetable of activities.

Since my last visit, leaders have introduced a new approach to collecting information about how well pupils are doing in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers know how to use the system. Leaders are using this information to check the proportion of pupils who are working at the expected standards, or above, for their age. They are not yet using this information to check the progress that pupils make from their different starting points.

The teacher with responsibility for leading reading knows the strengths and weaknesses in this area very well. She has introduced a number of new initiatives to support staff with checking pupils' progress in reading. As a result, more pupils are reading appropriately challenging material. The staff have a clear understanding of the reading policy. The basic requirements for completing pupils' reading records are established in every class.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has built on the good work started last term. She has organised training for staff and provided a clear overview of the support that is in place for all pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. She is receiving an increased level of support from the trust. Teachers are clear about their responsibilities for supporting these pupils.

Governors have a secure understanding of the issues facing the school. They have high expectations of the school's leaders. They are keeping a close eye on the progress that the school is making towards the removal of special measures. They are using the milestones and targets set in the school's action plan to check the school's progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers have shared examples of pupils' work with staff at Featherstone Academy. They have discussed the standards achieved by pupils and the next steps in learning. This has raised teachers' expectations and given them confidence to assess accurately standards of pupils' work and their progress. Work in pupils' books shows that now more work is set that builds on what pupils already know, understand and can do. However, this remains variable across classes.

There is some evidence that teachers are setting tasks that encourage pupils to use and apply their previous knowledge in different contexts. For example, during the inspection, Year 5 pupils were challenged to apply their previous learning to discuss figurative language when reading and discussing a new text. Pupils rose to the

occasion. They freely and correctly used terms such as 'metaphor' and 'onomatopoeia' to describe their responses. They were required to think deeply and they demonstrated pride in their learning.

These approaches are, however, inconsistent across the school. Teachers do not routinely provide opportunities for pupils to draw on what they already know and deepen their understanding. Work in pupils' books and discussions with pupils show that there are still too few opportunities for pupils to reason mathematically or use their mathematical knowledge to solve practical problems. As a result, pupils are not required to recall and apply their mathematical knowledge rapidly and accurately, or to persevere and find ways of solving problems.

The school's new assessment system provides a clear picture of the proportions of pupils across the school who are working above the expected standards for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This is a very recent development. Teachers are familiar with the system but are not yet using this information to plan future teaching and learning.

Teachers are better informed about the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Individual pupil's learning plans are in place. These are shared and regularly reviewed with the SENCo. Teachers value the joint planning with the SENCo and regular reviews of pupils' learning and personal development. There are signs that tasks are better matched to the needs of most of these pupils. Leaders and staff recognise that further work is needed to continue improving support for these pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are positive about the new behaviour policy which clearly sets out the behaviour expected of everyone. They say that there are still 'times when some people let themselves down' but that teachers deal with this fairly. It is pleasing to see that there is a positive climate around the school.

The 'recognition boards' in every classroom are used effectively by staff to promote positive attitudes. Even the youngest children talked easily to inspectors about their understanding of 'respectful behaviour'. Their comments included 'it means that you don't snatch glue sticks' and 'it really means not shouting but listening and helping'. Staff use the school's behaviour policy consistently and pupils understand and value the rewards and sanctions systems.

Those pupils who find it more difficult to manage their behaviour are supported by individual support plans. The SENCo is working closely with staff to ensure that these plans are working effectively. Leaders recognise that more needs to be done to sustain these changes and to encourage pupils' self-discipline. Analysis of improvements to behaviour over time is in early stages. This will be a focus of the next monitoring inspection.

The Year 6 leader has built successfully on some of the approaches introduced last term to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Attractive displays of pupils' work around the school, such as 'Democracy week', are a testimony to this. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were visiting the local mayor and participated in a question and answer session in the Mayor's Parlour. They were proud of their contributions and demonstrated enthusiasm and positive attitudes to learning. These activities are fostering a love of learning.

Leaders are working with local authority advisers to improve pupils' attendance. Pupils understand the importance of attending school. They want to contribute towards class awards and demonstrate responsible attitudes towards this. There are signs that attendance is improving but it is still below the national average.

The school's systems for checking the attendance of different groups lack detail. Some groups of pupils miss more sessions than others. The impact of this on pupils' achievement is not checked carefully enough or shared with parents.

Parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the changes at the school. They valued the meetings that the director of the trust held with them following the last monitoring inspection. They feel that communication between the school and parents is improving. This area for improvement will be a focus of the next monitoring inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

At the end of the Reception Year in 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development continued to improve and was close to national figures. The early years leader is not complacent. She has undertaken an analysis of work from the previous year and devised plans to increase the proportion of children achieving a good level of development still further.

There is a buzz among the staff in Nursery and Reception and a spirit of professional learning. Children use the attractive learning environment freely to support their learning. They make at least average and often better than average progress from their different starting points.

In 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check dipped and was below the national average. Leaders have quickly responded to this. They have arranged focused staff training and reorganised teaching groups. It is too early to show the impact of these changes on pupils' progress in phonics.

In 2017, pupils' outcomes at the end of key stage 1 remained particularly low in writing. Pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 in 2017 had made very poor progress in reading from their different starting points during key stage 2. This represents a legacy of underachievement and poor teaching. At the time of the

inspection, leaders did not have information about the current progress of pupils. This aspect will be looked at during the next monitoring inspection.

Disadvantaged pupils have made very poor progress in recent years. Leaders are now responding to the recommendations made in the external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding. Current plans to monitor the impact of funding and improve outcomes for this group of pupils are now more specific than in the past. A senior leader has recently taken on responsibility for this. She is supported by a member of the local governing body. However, these changes are very new and disadvantaged pupils are still making poor progress across all subjects. This aspect will be looked at during the next monitoring inspection.

The SENCo is keeping a careful check on the progress of each individual pupil receiving SEN support. It is pleasing to note that there are signs of improvement in the progress that these pupils are making in their learning and personal development.

External support

The trust responded swiftly to the recommendations from the previous monitoring inspection report. Effective action was taken to increase the level of support for the school. Intensive programmes of support for individual teachers were introduced immediately. Additional help from a local leader of education was organised swiftly to ensure that the school had capacity to honour the actions identified on the support programmes. The trust's director for primary academies is closely monitoring the impact of this support.