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Ms Kerry Haines
The Manor CofE VC Primary School
Ruskin Avenue
Melksham
Wiltshire
SN12 7NG

Dear Ms Haines

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Manor CofE VC Primary School

Following my visit to your academy 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 academy’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 April 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 trust’s statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school’s improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the interim chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Salisbury, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children’s services for Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tonwen Empson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the impact of leadership and management, including governance by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels tackle inadequate teaching and eradicate underachievement
 - developing the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders so that they fully contribute to ensuring that no groups of pupils underachieve
 - making sure that leaders evaluate the quality of teaching and learning accurately to bring about swift improvement in pupils' progress, particularly for those eligible for additional funding
 - sharpening the focus on raising standards across all subjects quickly, including in the early years
 - ensuring that the trust provides effective challenge and support to bring about rapid improvement in the outcomes of pupils, including those in the early years.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - insisting that teachers use accurate assessments to provide work that is closely matched to their pupils' needs
 - ensuring that teachers assess pupils effectively during lessons so that teaching is adapted promptly to pupils' needs and holds their attention to the task
 - improving the quality of the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils' residual underachievement is eradicated and pupils make strong progress from their different starting points
 - providing a curriculum that stretches and challenges pupils, particularly for middle-attaining and the most able pupils.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - reducing exclusions so that they are below national averages
 - further improving attendance so that persistent absence is minimised, particularly for disadvantaged pupils
 - enabling pupils to become determined learners and show resilience in their work
 - consistently applying the behaviour policy to eradicate low-level disruption in lessons
 - improving the leadership systems to support the inclusion of pupils who have

special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, so that behaviour plans for individuals are fit for purpose and systems to support pupils who attend alternative provision are strengthened.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding 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 observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. She met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, teachers and parents. She also met the interim chief executive officer from the Academy Trust of Melksham (ATOM) and the school improvement adviser. The inspector conducted joint visits to lessons with senior leaders to observe pupils' learning and behaviour. Together with leaders, she also looked at pupils' workbooks.

Context

Following the previous inspection, the ATOM commissioned support for school improvement from The White Horse Federation (WHF), a multi-academy trust. The chief executive officer of the WHF took up position as interim chief executive officer of the ATOM during the summer term 2017. The governing body was removed and replaced by an interim academy board.

There have also been some recent key changes in staff. A special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and a leader for early years took up their posts in September 2017. A new interim headteacher is due to begin work at the school in January 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Eight months after the school was placed into special measures, teaching remains inconsistent and of too poor a quality. As a result, far too many pupils are still working below the expectations for their age and too few of the middle-attaining and most able pupils are reaching higher standards.

Leaders and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, they have done too little to secure solid improvements, particularly to the quality of teaching and learning.

The school improvement plan covers all areas for improvement. There is a monitoring schedule that sits alongside the plan and maps out when actions should take place. However, the plan does not give leaders and governors clarity about how to evaluate the impact that the planned improvements will have on pupils' outcomes. Leaders and teachers have not been held to account for the changes described in the plan. This lack of rigour means that the pace of change has been too slow.

Senior and middle leaders are working on developing consistent and effective

approaches to secure good teaching and learning, but these are at early stages of development. There remains a lack of understanding across the school of what good-quality teaching looks like. Although leaders carry out monitoring activities to evaluate the quality of teaching, they have not ensured that teachers are sufficiently challenged and held rigorously to account for their work. At the next special measures visit, it will be important for leaders to demonstrate the impact of their work to improve teaching, learning and assessment across the school.

Following the inspection in April 2017, the governing body was replaced with an interim academy board. The interim board currently consists of two members. A governance review was carried out in July 2017, but this has had little impact on improving governance. As yet, governance is not able to hold leaders to account and drive forward the changes needed.

A review of the use of pupil premium funding took place in September 2017. Several recommendations were made. Individual plans are now in place for disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' individual welfare needs are considered at fortnightly pastoral meetings, which include staff who lead on attendance, safeguarding, behaviour and special educational needs (SEN).

Although a more consistent approach has been secured, there is no clear evidence to show the difference being made to pupils' outcomes. The assessment information presented by leaders shows that very few disadvantaged pupils are working at the expected standards for their age.

There are new curriculum resources in place for teachers to use, and parents have recognised improvements to pupils' interest in their learning. Some parents also appreciate the new approach towards homework. They said that pupils now enjoy the activities and take far more care over homework.

A strong safeguarding culture is well established and is led well. Appropriate checks are made during the recruitment of staff. Staff receive wide-ranging training and regular updates on safeguarding issues.

The WHF conducted a review in November 2017. Following this, a plan has been put in place which includes professional development for staff and improvements to the learning environments. It also includes changes to the leadership and management of the school. The plan will be evaluated at the next special measures visit.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders are starting to use a new assessment system to check how many pupils are working at the expected standard for their age. However, systems to show the progress that pupils make from their starting points are not in place. Teachers have an inconsistent understanding of how to use assessment information to ensure that

the work they plan matches pupils' needs. As a result, expectations are often still too low and work does not challenge pupils. Pupils' workbooks, particularly for writing, show that too few pupils are improving their skills or show pride in their work.

Learning time is frequently lost during lessons, as teachers do not use time well to ensure that learning is adapted to meet individuals' needs. As a result, pupils do not have the support and guidance they need, which means they sometimes repeat mistakes rather than improve their skills.

New strategies have been introduced, aiming to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are able to make better progress. Pupils are given short sessions in the afternoons either to repeat learning or to prepare them for new learning. However, leaders do not have any information that shows the impact of this on the progress pupils make.

There have been recent changes made to the organisation of learning across the day in the early years. Children are given more time to focus on a particular area of learning rather than changing from one subject to the next. It is too soon to see the impact of this on the progress children make.

Following recent training provided by the WHF, changes have been introduced to the teaching of mathematics across the school. A teaching sequence of 'do it, twist it, solve it', provides a clear structure to lessons. This is starting to raise expectations and challenge pupils to think more deeply during mathematics lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour during lessons has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils move around the school calmly and are generally polite and courteous. Teachers, pupils and parents agree that the focus on more positive approaches to recognising good behaviour is supporting improved behaviour across the school. Individual plans are now in place to support pupils who find it more difficult to manage their behaviour. The strategies introduced to improve behaviour have resulted in a reduction in the number of exclusions.

Pupils show that they want to work hard. This can be seen particularly in mathematics in which pupils are starting to rise to the more challenging, and therefore more interesting, lessons.

Initiatives to improve attendance have been introduced. Staff work to gain a better understanding of the difficulties that pupils are facing. The pastoral team now shares information and this helps the team to ensure that families receive support when needed. As a result, attendance for some pupils who previously had poor attendance is improving.

Outcomes for pupils

There remains insufficient focus on improving achievement for pupils and too many pupils continue to underachieve. Outcomes in 2017 showed that progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics were weak and well below national averages in key stages 1 and 2. Too few of the most able and middle-attaining pupils reach higher standards. Disadvantaged pupils are not catching up with their peers.

Outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check were also well below the national averages. Recently, staff have been encouraged to assess pupils' phonics skills more often so that changes can be made to teaching for any pupils who are falling behind. This has yet to be put firmly into place.

Early years staff are working to ensure that a more robust system identifies how well children are achieving so that they can adapt teaching as needed. This is at an early stage of development.

The recently appointed SENCo has started work to ensure that individual plans are clear and identify precise next steps for pupils. It is too soon to see the impact of this on outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

External support

The school has sought school improvement from a variety of sources since the previous inspection. A lack of consistency in the support provided has led to some confusion for leaders and has not helped the pace of change.

More recently, the WHF has been working with school leaders to identify the support needed and has provided staff with professional development. The impact of this can be seen recently, in improvements to the quality of teaching in mathematics.

Governors recognise that there has been a lack of rigour and consistency in holding leaders to account for the pace of change. They welcome the additional support and challenge that the WHF is starting to provide for leaders and governors.