

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



5 January 2018

Mrs Helen Pearson  
Principal  
Ryecroft Primary Academy  
Kesteven Close  
Holmewood  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire  
BD4 0LS

Dear Mrs Pearson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Ryecroft Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Mary Lanovy-Taylor, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school 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.

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 interim executive board, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Riozzi

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective by:
  - implementing systems for checking the suitability of staff to work in the school in line with Department for Education (DfE) requirements
  - implementing a robust monitoring system to guarantee that all required checks on staff are in place and the school's record of checks is complete and up to date
  - making sure that the school's safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date and all staff are knowledgeable about how to promote pupils' safety and welfare.
- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders and governors have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the school's performance
  - improvement plans are sharply focused on the school's key weaknesses and are regularly and robustly reviewed and updated
  - performance management is used to drive improvement in teaching, accelerate pupils' progress, especially for disadvantaged pupils, and hold teachers and leaders more rigorously to account
  - additional funding, including the pupil premium, is used effectively and the impact of this funding on outcomes for pupils is closely monitored by senior leaders
  - pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced, especially their knowledge of the faiths and cultures of people living in modern Britain.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and increase the progress pupils make, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most able, by ensuring that:
  - all teachers have the strong subject knowledge needed to teach pupils well and assess their progress accurately
  - assessment information is used effectively by teachers to plan learning activities which are closely matched to pupils' interests and levels of ability.

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 pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may

be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 December 2017**

### **Evidence**

Meetings were held with the principal, vice-principal and assistant principals. The lead inspector discussed with the chief executive officer of the Northern Education Trust (NET), on the telephone, the support and challenge the trust is providing. Discussions were also held with representatives of the Delta Academies Trust, the chair of the interim executive board and another member of the board. Inspectors talked with pupils, observed lessons and examined pupils' workbooks. Documents were scrutinised, including the school's record of pre-employment safeguarding checks, pupils' assessment information, the school improvement plan, behaviour records and leaders' records of the checks they make on the quality of teaching.

Although behaviour was not an area for improvement identified at the inspection in November 2016, the lead inspector identified this as an emerging issue at the first monitoring inspection that took place in July 2017. Therefore, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils was a specific area of attention during this inspection.

### **Context**

A new principal took up the permanent post in September 2017, along with an assistant principal, to work with the existing assistant principal and vice-principal. A leader having oversight of the early years and key stage 1 took up post in September 2017, but has since left the school. A small number of teachers and teaching assistants have left the school, and a few others have joined. The interim executive board that previously had responsibility for two schools has been split, so that the existing board, under a new chair, is solely responsible for Rycroft Primary Academy. NET has brokered the support of the Delta Academies Trust to help the school to improve further.

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

Leadership has improved since the last inspection. Because of the increased number of leaders, and the skills, experience and expertise of these leaders, there is much more resource available for improvement. The principal has hit the ground running, making rapid and positive changes and getting to know parents. Her hard work, commitment, dedication and fortitude have re-energised the school. Given the lost time earlier in the school's improvement journey, when leaders and the trust did not take effective action, the school is not as far along in its development as it might otherwise be a year from its inspection. However, leaders are taking effective action and it is conceivable, if improvement continues at the current pace, that the school could be removed from special measures in the required timescale.

Leaders are carrying out routine and thorough checks on the quality of teaching. These checks emphasise the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.

Leaders are tracking meticulously the progress of every pupil. Consequently, leaders have a detailed and accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and of the patterns in achievement and underachievement for key groups of pupils in all year groups. Teaching is improving and pupils are beginning to make quicker progress.

The principal, with her team, has devised an ambitious plan of action with which leaders are keeping pace. The plan identifies exactly what teachers and leaders are expected to do. This is raising the game for adults and pupils. For example, the plan lays out precisely how teachers should help pupils to improve their handwriting and how pupils should form their letters. Handwriting, as a result, is improving quickly in most classes and most pupils are beginning to take more pride in their work. However, the plan does not identify precisely enough the measurable progress pupils should make over time. The principal, the trust and governors agree that more precise milestone targets would help leaders to shine a brighter light on the impact of their actions, not just on whether or not the actions have been completed.

Leaders and teachers have a much better understanding of what individual pupils can and cannot do. The information about pupils' learning and progress helps leaders and teachers to set targets for what pupils should learn that are more exact. Leaders check progress towards these targets. This is raising teachers' expectations of what pupils should know, understand and be able to do. It is also helping leaders to hold teachers effectively to account for the progress of their pupils. Although accountability has increased considerably day to day, the written objectives that form a part of teachers' formal appraisal are not specific and measurable enough; they would benefit from some sharpening.

The trust, as agreed at the last inspection, has commissioned a second review of the use of the substantial pupil premium funds. This is not yet complete. However, leaders have not wasted time in formulating a temporary strategy for improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged pupils. The actions identified are appropriate, given pupils' barriers to learning. It is too early to assess the impact of these ongoing actions.

Leaders, governors and the trust have sustained their strong emphasis on various aspects of safeguarding.

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

The work in pupils' books shows that teachers are making better use of what they know about pupils' past learning to plan suitable work for pupils of different abilities. Teachers are beginning to better challenge the most able pupils. For example, the mathematics books of Year 6 pupils show how teachers are beginning to give these pupils more tricky problems to solve. These improvements are not consistent in all classes.

Teachers are working together to check the accuracy of each other's assessments. This effective work has improved the accuracy of assessment and is improving teachers' subject knowledge.

One inspector watched as Year 1 pupils concentrated on their writing, forming their letters exceptionally well, making sure that they left spaces between their words and checking that their sentences made sense. The teacher and teaching assistant checked the pupils' work carefully and helped the pupils to identify where they could improve. This is helping the pupils to make more rapid progress. They are improving the accuracy and neatness of their writing and now need to build stamina to write at greater length.

There are green shoots of improvement in the early years. The early years is generally well resourced and laid out. Adults are responsive to the choices children make and they encourage children to choose those activities that are most likely to enhance learning. However, teachers do not arrange many of the resources in a way that helps children to play and explore so that they are challenged sufficiently; this is especially so outdoors. Leaders have plans in place to improve the security and quality of the outdoor spaces. Teachers are securing a better balance between opportunities to teach children directly, and opportunities for children to learn through their independent play and exploration. Adults ask open questions to encourage children's talk, but they are not often enough modelling the language that would help children to make more rapid progress in their English language development.

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

Pupils understand the new behaviour policy and teachers are applying the agreed actions with increasing consistency. Staff, parents and governors report improvements in the behaviour and attitudes of pupils. Inspectors detected a tangible improvement in the atmosphere around the school. However, pupils still report disruptions to their learning caused by a minority of their classmates. In the school's own recent survey, pupils gave positive responses to most of the aspects about which they were asked. However, as many as a third of them felt that behaviour was only good some of the time.

Leaders are keeping a careful record of all incidents of poor behaviour, but are still not analysing this information in a way that would help them to bring about more rapid improvements. Leaders should continue to strengthen approaches to managing pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning so that more pupils consistently work hard and are able to sustain better progress. Inspectors will continue to look carefully at pupils' behaviour on future visits.

Displays around the school, and a scheme of work, show some improvements to the extent to which leaders are promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. For example, pupils had completed some artwork on the theme of remembrance poppies. However, pupils could not recollect any specific examples of learning about different cultures and religions.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school's own records, which are now more accurate, show much better progress for pupils over the last term in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes disadvantaged pupils. This is primarily because of the very effective systems leaders have put in place to identify what pupils need to learn, the raised expectations, and the stronger accountability of teachers. However, attainment across the school remains low, especially for pupils in Year 5, who have the most catching up to do. Furthermore, too few of the most able pupils across the school are reaching the higher standards of which they should be capable, although there are some reassuring signs that teachers are beginning to better challenge these pupils.

The unvalidated 2017 test results confirm the rapid progress made by Year 6 pupils last year, compensating to some degree for the lack of progress made earlier in their school experience. The current Year 6 pupils also have a great deal of ground to make up for the earlier weaker teaching they experienced. Leaders, governors and the trust are checking rigorously at regular intervals that pupils are making the required progress to help them catch up. It is too early to predict outcomes in 2018, but pupils' workbooks show quickening progress.

The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has increased for two years running, although it remains below the national average. However, more pupils entered Year 1 this year well prepared for this next stage of their education.

### **External support**

The Northern Education Trust has successfully secured a stronger leadership team. Volatility in staffing has stabilised somewhat but remains fragile. The trust has struggled to recruit a replacement early years leader.

The trust has commissioned support from a number of consultants and specialists. Leaders have made effective use of the support and challenge these professionals give. The principal has independently sourced additional support. The new chief executive officer of the trust has introduced more robust methods to check routinely the progress that groups and identified individual pupils are making.

Accepting the limited resource the trust has in the local area, it has sensibly brokered the services of a local trust, the Delta Academies Trust, to undertake substantial improvement work. Work has already begun and staff are positive about the partnership. It is too early to assess the impact of the work, although an



appropriate plan is in place.

The trust has made changes to the interim executive board so that it no longer oversees two schools. This means governors, under the leadership of a new, experienced chair, can concentrate more on the outcomes for pupils at Ryecroft. Governors continue to offer appropriate challenge to leaders. They ask the right questions and make no excuses. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well and do not underestimate the enormity of the task ahead if the school is to make up for earlier lost ground.