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Mrs Moira Cross
Executive Headteacher
Wood End Primary School
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Atherstone
Warwickshire
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Dear Mrs Cross

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wood End Primary School

Following my visit with Sue Cameron, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 31 January to 1 February 2018, 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 December 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 school's improvement plans are 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 governing body, the chief executive officer of Community Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve progress and thereby raise attainment throughout key stages 1 and 2, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise expectations and the level of challenge for pupils across the curriculum, especially for the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils
 - plan work which meets pupils' needs, including the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - adjust tasks as necessary during lessons in response to pupils' understanding and their rates of progress
 - provide work that maintains the pupils' interest so they have positive attitudes to learning
 - provide high-quality phonics teaching, based on a consistent approach
 - carefully match reading books to pupils' abilities
 - give pupils regular opportunities to write at length
 - plan work that develops pupils' subject-specific skills across the curriculum.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the multi-academy trust, governors and school leaders understand the accountability structure of the school and their roles and responsibilities
 - school development activities are carefully prioritised, sharply focused on the key weaknesses in school and accurately evaluated to ensure that they are having an impact on improving outcomes for pupils
 - weaknesses in teaching are identified and the right support and guidance is put in place
 - pupils' progress is assessed accurately across the curriculum, and assessment information is used carefully to plan work at the right level for all pupils and to provide support quickly to any who may be falling behind
 - additional funding is used effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - training and support are provided for leaders to enable them to become effective in their roles
 - disruption in lessons is minimised so that it does not stop pupils from learning

- the curriculum is planned and taught to provide pupils with opportunities to develop their skills across a range of subjects
- school leaders' roles and responsibilities, particularly those of the head of school, are reviewed to provide them with enough time to carry out checks on teaching, learning and assessment and provide support where it is needed.

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 second monitoring inspection on 31 January 2018 to 1 February 2018

Evidence

The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the associate headteacher, middle leaders, teaching staff, pupils, the chair of governors and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.

In addition, inspectors spoke with parents and carers on the playground at the beginning of the school day. The inspectors looked at pupils' books, various school documents, reports about the school's work and the school's website. The single central record of checks on staff was also examined.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection in September 2017, the teaching staff team has remained unchanged. A new school administrator has been appointed.

The education advisory board, which was set up to replace the governing body after the school went into special measures, was disbanded in November 2017. In its place, a new local governing body has been formed to provide governance of two schools: Wood End Primary and Dordon Primary. An executive headteacher divides her time between the two school sites and is responsible for the work and performance of both schools. An associate headteacher provides day-to-day operational leadership at Wood End Primary.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

As noted at the previous monitoring inspection, leaders at all levels understand their roles and responsibilities and are pulling in the same direction.

Strong leadership from the executive headteacher continues to drive effective school improvement. She is demonstrating an ability to get the best from others while also being sensitive to staff welfare. Consequently, team spirit and morale continues to strengthen.

Subject leaders have benefited from recent training and are now more involved in actions to improve teaching and learning. For example, they check planning and pupils' work. They have carried out joint lesson observations with senior leaders in order to gather information about the quality of teaching and learning in different classes. Their next step is to work alongside some staff, particularly in key stage 2, in order to sharpen up aspects of teaching and learning.

Furthermore, the creation of one governing body to oversee Wood End and Dordon Primary Schools has added greater stability and certainty to local leadership.

Records from recent meetings document an informed level of challenge from the governors as well as the actions they are taking to find out about the school's work and the support they offer.

School development plans set out realistic goals and make lines of accountability clear. Leaders are rightly focusing on establishing sustainable whole-school systems, lifting expectations, improving teaching and boosting progress in core subjects. In all four areas they have made improvements. This is evident in the school's own assessment information from the autumn term 2017. This shows that, while academic standards are still too low, there has been accelerated progress in English and mathematics in almost all year groups. This is a significant step forward and leaders are keen to maintain the momentum while also ensuring that assessment is reliable. To this end, subject leaders work with staff to make sure their judgements about pupils' knowledge and understanding are properly informed. This collaborative way of working reflects leaders' focus on ensuring a consistent approach and the increased accountability measures that are now in place. The current assessment system is fit for purpose but some teachers' assessments are more precise than others.

It is fair to say that the use of assessment to record progress over time and to pitch day-to-day teaching at the right level remains an area in need of further improvement.

The pupil premium, which is funding to support disadvantaged pupils, is used in line with its intended purpose and the associate headteacher keeps a watchful eye on the impact of spending. Across the school, all staff now have a greater awareness of the target pupil group and take an additional interest in their progress and welfare. Like other pupils in the school, this group of pupils are now making faster progress but have still not caught up to where they ought to be.

The leadership of special educational needs, which had already strengthened considerably at the time of the first monitoring inspection, continues to present a positive picture. Pupils get timely support and work with specialist agencies if necessary.

In addition to a number of external monitoring reports about the school's recent performance, the multi-academy trust recently led a useful review. This found marked improvements in pupils' behaviour and in their attitudes to school and learning. It also noted improvements in the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and increased levels of parental satisfaction with the school's work. Parents who spoke with inspectors during the inspection said that expectations of pupils and parents had risen and that this was a good thing.

On a matter of safety, there is some thoughtless driving and parking in the mornings by a small number of people. Inspectors observed a car parked across the

school gates, which caused an obstacle to the school bus. Inspectors also saw two cars entering the school through the exit gate, so going against the flow of traffic. This is not helpful to anyone and restricts adults' view of pupils walking into school. It must stop.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching in all classes is better than it used to be and there is clear evidence of a growing consistency of approach. Lessons start promptly, pupils are well behaved and teachers make sure that mistakes or misunderstandings from previous lessons are followed up.

Nevertheless, there are still problems to be addressed. One key difficulty is the legacy caused by weak teaching in the past. In Years 2 to 6, some pupils struggle to form letters correctly or to present their work neatly because they were not taught how to hold a pencil correctly when they were younger. This is hampering teachers' efforts to improve their handwriting. On a more positive note, current practice in the early years and Year 1 is suitably attentive to this important skill. Pupils who started school in more recent times are following an appropriate curriculum that is taught competently.

In addition to poor presentation, pupils' spelling is also a concern. Teachers are alert to this and provide helpful resources and support for spelling. Even so, poor spelling persists and teachers could do more to remind pupils to use the word cards or dictionaries that are on their desks.

These weaknesses in handwriting and spelling limit the quality of pupils' writing but there is a whole-school enthusiasm to make improvements. Staff are working hard to build pupils' confidence and encourage them to take pride in their work. A wow wall display in the main corridor celebrates effort and achievement in writing. On other walls, there are numerous framed photographs of pupils participating in different curriculum events or special occasions, which are often used as a stimulus for writing. These recent displays are telling signs of teachers' raised expectations and ambition for pupils. In every class, it is apparent that pupils are writing more than they used to, and at greater length.

In fact, older pupils can speak in an informed way about the impact of the school's work to improve their writing. They are keenly aware that this is a high priority and that the quality and quantity of their written work needs to improve. During this inspection, pupils who shared their work with inspectors could describe the progress they had made and how teaching was helping them to acquire new skills. They also explained how they review their own work with a critical eye in order to edit and refine it further. Nevertheless, remaining shortcomings in assessment mean that some teaching focuses on the wrong things.

The school is also taking steps to promote reading and increase pupils' reading

skills. Phonics teaching in the early part of the school is effective and this is having a positive effect on pupils' early attitudes to reading. Staff are also optimistic that improvements in pupils' phonic knowledge will help them with their spelling. In Reception and key stage 1 classes, sessions are regular, brisk, purposeful and fun. Consequently, pupils respond well.

The school's reading books, which used to be stored on tall shelves in a corridor, have been moved into classrooms so it easier for pupils to see and use them. Each classroom has a reading area and there are rewards for pupils who read regularly. During this inspection, teachers swapped classes for half an hour for a story-telling session. Pupils enjoyed listening to the stories. In one instance, a teacher dressed up as Willy Wonka and gave out golden tickets to pupils who volunteered answers and ideas about a Roald Dahl story. This added an extra layer of excitement and, in all classes, pupils were clearly captivated by teachers' story telling. On a day-to-day basis, teachers do read to pupils. More often than not, this is linked to literacy or other work and leads to questions or tasks for pupils to complete. Reading purely for pleasure seems less common. Pupils do have time to read their own books and there is a workable system for matching books to pupils' abilities and interests. However, pupils cannot readily talk about recent changes in practice at the school and how these have made a difference to their work or enjoyment of reading.

The level of challenge in lessons is improving, but it is still not quite right. In a key stage 2 mathematics lesson, for example, some pupils were moved onto challenging work too quickly because the teacher had made assumptions about what they already knew. In another instance lower down the school, many pupils struggled to understand a new piece of work about addition and subtraction. Teaching responded quickly to this but it meant that those pupils who had kept up were left waiting while the teacher went over work again with the rest of the class.

Teaching assistants provide valuable extra help to teachers and pupils, often supporting in class or leading small group sessions. Just occasionally, teaching assistants focus too much on getting a task done or over controlling pupils rather than the learning to be covered. This can lead to teaching assistants doing too much for the pupils or can result in a few sharp comments that are not helpful. This does not build confidence or encourage pupils to persevere.

As noted in the previous monitoring inspection, staff are understandably focusing their energies on lifting standards in English and mathematics. Consequently, leaders' plans to improve pupils' progression of skills in non-core subjects are still on the back burner. However, a broad range of subjects is taught and pupils' enjoyment of different school activities is apparent. In a lively dance session, for example, pupils' joyous enthusiasm was plain to see. The school also organises special events such as an enterprise day, when pupils made and sold goods to raise

funds. Colourful displays around the school record a variety of worthwhile activities in many different subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour in lessons gives no cause for concern. All the evidence gathered during this inspection indicates that pupils are usually attentive and polite in class. Parents and pupils told inspectors that staff now spend less time managing poor behaviour and more time praising positive behaviour. In addition, the one word school rule of 'respect' is widely understood by pupils and an increasing number of pupils take on voluntary jobs to help others in school. The result of this is that pupils feel better about themselves and school life. That said, pupils also say that there is some boisterous behaviour by older boys at lunchtimes which can be a bit overwhelming for younger pupils. They say that the school's rules are usually applied fairly.

Overall attendance at school is not a major concern. In fact, over one third of the school has over 98% attendance for the year so far. Nevertheless, 24 pupils have under 90% attendance, which is the equivalent of missing at least half a day each week. There are reasonable explanations for some absence, but this is not the case in all instances. Pupils who miss too much school risk falling further behind in their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' progress continues to improve. The school's increasingly reliable assessment information shows that standards are now starting to rise, and this is most evident in key stage 1. Indeed, in Year 1, the proportion of pupils on track to meet the expected standard in the annual phonics screening check compares very favourably with last year's national figure. In Year 2, many more pupils are working at age-related expectations than was the case last year.

In key stage 2, however, standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain a concern. Work in pupils' books and the school's own tracking information reveals that older pupils are still some way behind where they ought to be given their starting points. In Year 6, for instance, a significant proportion of pupils are some way behind age-related expectations. Progress rates have undoubtedly increased but there is still a lot of lost ground to make up. On a positive note, some of the most able pupils are catching up quickly.

External support

The school continues to benefit from support from schools within the multi-academy trust and has received useful advice from educational consultants and local school leaders.