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26 March 2018

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, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 13 to 14 March 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 third 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 local academy board, the chair of the board of trustees, 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 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 in 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 that requires pupils 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 third monitoring inspection on 13 March 2018 to 14 March 2018**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other leaders, including the local leader of education who continues to work with the school. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) 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. Inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day on both inspection days. A range of documents was 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, the headteacher has resigned and will leave the school at the end of April 2018. The local governing body has made an agreement with the multi-academy trust directors to restructure the leadership team at Edgar Stammers. The effective partnership between Edgar Stammers and Featherstone School will continue. The headteacher from Featherstone School, who is a local leader of education, will become the executive headteacher from 1 May 2018. Additionally, the governing body has agreed to appoint a new head of school from 1 May 2018.

Since my last visit, two teachers have left. These classes are currently covered by supply teachers. Governors have appointed one teacher who will join the school in April 2018.

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

Since the last monitoring inspection, there have been further changes in staffing and some staff absences due to illness. Leaders have managed these changes effectively. You have continued to prioritise improving the quality of teaching and learning. This has had a positive impact. There are signs that teaching has improved, particularly in mathematics and reading.

Leaders now have an accurate judgement of the quality of teaching and learning. Your checks on teachers' work are based on a range of information, including the work in pupils' books, lesson observations, discussions with pupils and information about pupils' progress. This is an improvement on the previous monitoring inspection. However, feedback to teachers following these checks is still not precise enough. Monitoring activities lack a clear focus on the areas for improvement and there is no focus on the impact of teaching on different groups of pupils. As a consequence, feedback to teachers does not focus precisely on what the teacher needs to do to help pupils make faster progress or challenge the most able pupils.

Middle leaders are growing in confidence and skill and are leading their phases effectively. They have benefited from the support provided by the two deputy headteachers, trust advisers and from Featherstone School leaders. They are all working extremely hard and demonstrating effective leadership skills across their areas of responsibility. They take every opportunity to drop into classes and support and guide new staff. As a result, there is evidence of a more consistent application of school policy requirements, particularly in teachers' approaches to the planning and teaching of mathematics and the teaching of reading.

Established staff are more confident in using the new assessment information to inform their planning. You are aware that there are occasional inaccuracies in the assessments, particularly in judgements about standards of pupils' writing. Work is under way to address this.

Leaders are beginning to analyse assessment information and use their findings to drive improvements. For example, there is a more effective focus on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The deputy headteacher's analysis of assessment information for this group of pupils now provides a clear picture of where class teaching and additional support are working well and where they need to be adjusted. She is using this information effectively to inform future actions.

You are aware that leaders are not yet analysing assessment information to judge pupils' progress from their different starting points. As a result, information about pupils' previous attainment is not being used effectively to inform planning and drive improvements to teaching and learning. It is not clear whether pupils who achieved higher standards at the end of a previous key stage are set challenging work that requires them to think deeply. This will be a focus of the next inspection.

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

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to vary across the school. The pace of improvement has been hindered by changes in staffing.

In those classes with established teachers, there are clear signs of improvement. For example, work in pupils' mathematics books shows that teachers are using assessment information to address gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding. Teachers are setting work that is securely based on what pupils know and understand. They are providing opportunities for pupils to recall and apply their mathematical knowledge in new ways to solve problems. Pupils are enthusiastic about the new 'times table' routines. They demonstrate good understanding of which aspects of mathematics they need to work on and improve. There is evidence that pupils are required to return to their work to correct errors and misunderstandings. However, this good practice is not consistent across all classes, particularly where there has been disruption to teaching staff.

The extent to which pupils are challenged varies across the school. Teachers do not

routinely move pupils on to deepen their learning and work at higher standards in mathematics or in writing. Occasionally, this lack of challenge leads to low-level poor behaviour, particularly in lower key stage 2. Pupils have had to contend with many changes to staffing and the way in which they are taught and expected to behave. Leaders at all levels are aware of this and are working hard to address the past inconsistencies.

The provision in early years continues to be a strength. Staff use assessment information very effectively to plan next steps in children's learning and development. Teachers encourage children to use their knowledge of phonics when they read and write, prompting them to think back to previous lessons. Children's writing on display and in books shows that teachers make sensible links to children's favourite stories and topics. For example, Nursery children use their knowledge of letters and sounds as they write about their favourite stories and topics. As a result, children practise writing skills in different contexts and develop confidence as early writers. However, this high quality of teaching of writing varies across key stages 1 and 2.

Work in pupils' books shows that teachers provide opportunities for pupils to write in a range of subjects and topics. However, teachers' expectations vary across classes. In some classes, errors in basic punctuation, grammar and spelling are left unaddressed over long periods of time. Some pupils are not consistently clear about how they can improve their writing. This hinders pupils' progress and prevents them from working at higher standards. A new leader for English has been appointed from 1 April. The trust has plans in place to provide support and ensure that transition into her role is managed effectively.

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

Overall, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and show respect for each other and for staff. You now have sufficient information, from your tracking and monitoring, to judge the impact of the new behaviour policy. Your records and behaviour logs show a decrease in the number of more serious behaviour incidents over time. Nevertheless, you recognise that there has been an increase in low-level disruptive behaviour in some classes. You rightly link this to disruptions in staffing and the lack of consistent application of the behaviour policy by different teachers. You are taking actions to address this.

Parents and carers say that communication systems have continued to improve. They appreciate the text-message facility, the regular newsletters and the celebration assemblies. They also value the termly meetings with the director of the academy trust. They expressed concern about the changes in staffing, but appreciate the honesty of leaders in addressing these issues with parents.

Since my previous visit, there has been a much better whole-school understanding of strategies necessary to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. There is an

accurate analysis of the attendance of different groups of pupils. Improvements can be seen, although overall attendance remains below the national average. There is a significant increase in the number of pupils arriving to school on time.

The good work to improve pupils' spiritual, moral, social and culture awareness, identified at the previous monitoring inspection, has continued. Staff are making effective links across subjects and the leader for this aspect continues to provide strong direction. Pupils were eager to talk about their meeting with the Member of Parliament for Walsall. They demonstrate a mature understanding of the political process and the importance of exercising the right to vote.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Your records and work in pupils' books confirm that the decline in standards in writing and mathematics has been halted. However, the rate of improvement varies in different classes and for different subjects. For example, in key stage 1, more pupils are now working at the standards expected for their age in both mathematics and writing. You are confident that you will meet the targets and milestones set for reading, writing and mathematics, as shown in your improvement plan.

The picture is variable across key stage 2 classes, where pupils' progress in mathematics is more evident than in writing. The actions taken to secure pupils' basic understanding of mathematics and to address gaps in their knowledge and understanding are having a positive impact. Your records and work in pupils' books show that increasing numbers of pupils are working at the standards expected for their age in key stage 2.

However, pupils' progress in writing varies across different classes. Work in pupils' books confirms that actions taken to accelerate pupils' progress in writing in Year 6 have had a positive impact. More pupils are now working at the expected standards for writing in Year 6. However, in Years 3 to 5, pupils are not catching up at the same rate. Your assessment records and work in pupils' books show this. There are occasional inaccuracies in your assessments of writing when judgements are over-generous. The interim leader for English is aware of this and actions are under way.

In writing and mathematics, some pupils are not adequately challenged, given their prior attainment. Leaders and staff have focused on halting underachievement and increasing the proportions of pupils who are working at the standards expected for their age. As a result, the proportion of pupils who are working at higher standards remains too low across key stages 1 and 2.

## **External support**

The trust has continued to provide the school with an appropriate level of support. Staff from Featherstone Primary School have built effectively on the support programme that was noted at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Recent meetings with senior leaders and the chair of the local governing body have rightly focused on plans to support the changes in leadership after April. A strategic plan for a new leadership structure has been agreed. This is testimony to the hard work of the trust's director for primary academies. A relationship of trust and honesty has been established between school leaders and the trust. The trust recognises that the school is in a vulnerable position, particularly given the changes in headship. Directors have agreed appropriate plans to secure and strengthen leadership to ensure that the improvements made so far are sustained and built upon.