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Dear Mrs Leggett

Special measures monitoring inspection of Winsham Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11–12 April 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 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 September 2017.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in key stage 1, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use assessment information effectively to build on pupils’ existing skills, knowledge and understanding
 - raise expectations of what the pupils can achieve, including the most able
 - set work that is well matched to the different needs of the pupils in order to bring about strong progress
 - check pupils’ learning and respond to their different needs and abilities, including those of the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - governors understand their roles and responsibilities and take effective action to hold leaders to account
 - governors use available information to secure the necessary improvements in teaching and learning
 - subject leaders contribute to school improvement and the wider professional development of staff
 - accurate self-evaluation checks the impact of leaders’ work and is used to identify the right priorities for improvement, including in the early years
 - leaders take full account of pupils’ different starting points to raise achievement across the school.
- Improve the behaviour and welfare of pupils, by:
 - checking and evaluating the impact of the strategy to reduce exclusions
 - ensuring that pupils who have persistently high rates of absence are well supported and challenged to attend and achieve well.

An external review of governance and of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 April 2018 to 12 April 2018

Evidence

The inspector met with the interim headteacher to review a wide range of the school's work. Discussions were held with three members of the governing body, staff, pupils, parents and representatives of the local authority. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times and conducted visits to classrooms to observe pupils' learning. Pupils' work across a range of subjects and year groups was scrutinised. A range of other documentation, including the local authority statement of action, the school's improvement plans and the minutes of governor meetings and core group meetings were reviewed. The inspector checked a wide range of information about pupils' safety and safeguarding, including the single central record of checks on staff recruitment.

Context

The school had an academy order issued in November 2017. However, the conversion to a sponsored academy is yet to take place. At this time no sponsor has been found for the school.

Considerable changes in staffing and governance have taken place since the school was deemed to require special measures in September 2017. The interim headteacher is seconded to the school part-time. She has been in post since November 2017. She has supported the school in an advisory capacity from October 2017. A leader of special educational needs (SENCo) left the school in March 2018. There is a new service level agreement with Greenfylde School to cover the leadership of SEN and/or disabilities. The leader took up her post in April 2018.

An external review of governance did not take place because the governing body stepped down and was replaced with a new group of governors.

The school is part of the Willow Cooperative Trust (WCT). This is a group of three local primary schools. A formal application has been made to the local authority for the current group of governors to become an interim executive board (IEB). This is yet to be confirmed. Nevertheless, the new governors in post are working in partnership with the local authority, and core group meetings have been established with governors. This allows a range of local authority officers to hold the school to account for further improvement.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium has also not taken place. Very few pupils are eligible for this funding. The progress of the few pupils who are eligible is tracked thoroughly.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Current leaders, including governors, are making a determined and effective start to implement the changes needed to address the weaknesses in the school. They are working on the right aspects for improvement.

It is taking time to address the complex problems that the school has faced in the past. Leaders have needed to prioritise their actions. For example, the interim headteacher has been successful in strengthening operational systems within the school. As a result, whole-school administration, record-keeping systems and the deployment of teaching assistants are strengthening week on week. Leaders' actions to look precisely at pupils' attendance have led to a reduction of persistent absenteeism in the school.

Leaders' actions have been successful in strengthening record-keeping systems and processes to safeguard pupils, including staff vetting checks and maintaining the school's single central record. Increasingly, all staff understand their roles and responsibilities and how their day-to-day work contributes to the safe and smooth running of the school.

Leaders' work across the last 10 weeks has gathered momentum to tackle the widespread weaknesses in teaching and learning in the school. Leaders are introducing higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teacher appraisal systems are now closely matched to improving teaching and accelerating pupils' progress.

The new governing body has a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities. Core group meetings, regular governors meetings and visits to the school are ensuring that the school is moving in the right direction. Increasingly, governors are using available information to secure their own understanding of the improvements that are required to improve pupils' progress and achievement. However, governors are not yet getting information that is specific enough about whether groups of pupils are catching up quickly. Leaders discuss pupils' progress in professional meetings with staff. However, leaders' records do not yet take full account of pupils' progress from their starting points. As a result, systems to hold staff to account for accelerating pupils' progress remain underdeveloped. This makes it difficult for governors to hold leaders to account for bringing about rapid improvement to pupils' outcomes.

The interim headteacher has reviewed school timetables and increased the amount of learning time on offer for pupils. She is carrying out a comprehensive package of staff training. Consequently, teachers are developing their ability to ensure that teaching tackles pupils' prior underachievement in order for pupils to have the skills and knowledge expected for their age.

Mathematics and English subject leaders have been supported to write plans to

raise the quality of teaching and improve pupils' achievement in their subjects. The implementation of these plans is ongoing. The mathematics leader has conducted some checks on pupils' work in books and provided detailed feedback to staff about the impact of their teaching. These checks now need to provide more specific information, for example about the progress that groups of pupils make, and to take into account pupils' prior attainment.

Leadership capacity to drive the improvements required to the English curriculum has been too limited. Leaders' checks on pupils' progress in English are not yet remedying weaknesses in teaching and pupils' underachievement. Leaders are not yet giving sufficient focus to analysing workbooks to track pupils' progress in writing.

Governors have not ensured that a system to coach and support teachers to improve their teaching skills and English subject knowledge has been established quickly enough. They have not yet been successful in securing leadership for September 2018. These aspects must be resolved quickly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is improving gradually. The interim headteacher has been successful in implementing new school-wide system to raise teachers' expectations and gain greater consistency in planning and assessment practices. She rightly acknowledges that there remains much to do to eliminate the remaining weaknesses in teaching. As a result of staff training, teachers are beginning to plan key learning more precisely. Teachers share this information with pupils in lessons. This is helping pupils to understand the purpose of the tasks set.

The interim headteacher has put a new assessment cycle in place to ensure that teachers' assessments are regular and correct. The way pupils' understanding is checked is more precise. This is helping teachers to use their assessments to plan work in mathematics that builds directly on what pupils know, can do and understand.

Leaders' actions to improve mathematics teaching in key stage 2 are paying off. Better teaching of number skills is enabling pupils who have previously underachieved to catch up. However, in key stage 1, although some improvement is evident, occasions remain when pupils of different ages and abilities in the same class are not challenged well enough in mathematics. Sometimes work planned does not build on what pupils already know. Teaching can be sufficiently challenging on one day and too easy on the next.

The quality of English teaching is improving but inadequate teaching has not yet been fully eradicated. Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to plan work at the right level. Some teaching does not show pupils how to tackle new concepts. This slows the progress that pupils make over time. Teaching does not

yet provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write with the complexity, accuracy and depth expected for their age. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and most apply their best effort when writing. However, teachers do not pick up when pupils do not understand fully or when they make mistakes. As such, misconceptions and errors in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar go unnoticed in lessons and pupils practise skills inaccurately. Leaders have introduced whole school systems to assess pupils' writing ability prior to a unit of work. These sessions are intended to help teachers plan work that addresses pupils' weaknesses in writing. However, teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough to identify or address some of these weaknesses. As a result, pupils' progress in writing falters. Leaders have introduced new strategies to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar in key stage 2. However, it is too soon to see any impact from this.

The interim headteacher has raised the profile of reading in the school by increasing teaching time for reading in the school's weekly timetable. However, these sessions are not yet fully maximised in key stage 2 to improve pupils' understanding of what they read. Some pupils read books that are not matched to their needs. In key stage 1, pupils who have fallen behind in the past are now supported well to read with greater accuracy and fluency. This is increasing pupils' motivation to read. The teaching of phonics at key stage 1 remains too variable. Pupils can read words with increasing accuracy. However, too few pupils apply their skills in phonics to spell with accuracy when they write longer pieces of work.

The teaching of handwriting is proving effective. Pupils know what is expected and try hard to present their work to a consistently high standard in key stage 1 and 2.

A clear focus on the youngest children using correct pencil grip is already paying dividends. Most children in Reception are developing accurate letter formation. This is taught alongside basic sentence structure and enabling many children to write a simple sentence accurately.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The interim headteacher has been successful in implementing new behaviour guidance across the school. This is having a positive impact. Pupils understand the expectations and most adhere to them well. Leaders' actions to train staff to understand the precursors of challenging behaviour, what this is communicating and how to resolve it are leading to a considerable improvement in behaviour. As a result, the way in which staff manage challenging behaviour has improved quickly. The severity of episodes of challenging behaviour displayed by pupils has reduced significantly over time. There have been no exclusions this year.

Pupils look forward to the opportunity to become 'star of the day' and enjoy the positive praise they receive. When sanctions are given, procedures are usually followed consistently. The school is generally calm and orderly. Most pupils present their work well. However, when learning is not matched to pupils' needs, pupils can

become distracted and so their progress falters. As a result, low-level disruption still persists in learning time.

Refreshing the school's learning values is beginning to pay off. The redeployment of teaching assistants to focus on pupils' learning needs is ensuring that their support is targeted to both support learning and develop pupils' independence. However, teaching is not yet enabling pupils to have the determination to become resilient learners. This is because all too often teaching does not challenge pupils sufficiently.

Leaders do not check transitions between lessons well enough. Transitions within and across lessons are too slow. This is accepted by staff and pupils. As a result, despite leaders' reorganisation of school timetables, some pupils' learning time is wasted across the school day in key stage 1 and 2.

In just a few months, leaders have almost eliminated persistent absenteeism in the school. Leaders' work with external agencies and the introduction of whole-school systems to check pupils' attendance are paying off. As a result, pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average and improving steadily.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' outcomes remain too low. In 2017, published performance information showed that pupils made below-average progress. Current pupils in key stage 1 and 2 make progress that is too inconsistent in reading, writing and mathematics.

Leaders are beginning to secure improvements to the way that pupils' progress is checked. Teachers conduct assessments of pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge prior to a unit of work being taught. This supports teachers to address pupils' gaps in learning within the next unit. This is helping pupils who have previously fallen behind to catch up. As a result, pupils' progress in mathematics has accelerated over the last 10 weeks.

Despite recent developments to provide greater structure to the reading curriculum, too many pupils are not challenged enough. Leaders have introduced sessions for pupils to read for sustained periods across the school week. However, these times are not utilised well. Too little focus is given to developing pupils' understanding of what they read. Pupils are not required to use and apply their reading skills across a range of subjects. As a result, too few pupils read with the fluency and understanding expected for their age.

Pupils' outcomes in writing remain poor and show limited improvements. The weaknesses identified at the last inspection remain. This is because the full national curriculum requirements for writing are not yet being taught. Weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar have not been addressed successfully. For example, pupils have not been taught complex sentence structures or punctuation

in upper key stage 2. Leaders' actions are not yet remedying weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge. Consequently, pupils who are targeted for additional support are sometimes taught skills and knowledge inaccurately. This slows the progress that pupils make in their writing development.

Pupils in Year 1 and 2 have increased their stamina for writing. However, pupils' accuracy and detail of writing remains too inconsistent. Pupils do not apply their understanding of phonics to spell accurately. This is not routinely picked up by school staff. As a result, pupils' progress continues to falter.

External support

The local authority acted swiftly to broker interim leadership for the school. The local authority has provided strong support in setting up the new governing body. It has ensured that governors are equipped with the necessary skills and expertise to drive further improvement at the school. However, the local authority has been slow in processing the IEB application. Core group meetings with governors, school leaders and the local authority are setting a clear direction for school improvement. However, some roles and responsibilities of local authority officers need further clarification. This is because it is not clear enough who is providing support and who is evaluating the impact of school's actions. The current interim leadership agreement is set to finish in July 2018. As yet, future interim leadership is not secured. There is no support in place to coach and support teachers to improve their teaching. These aspects need sorting out quickly.

Priorities for further improvement

- Governors secure forward leadership arrangements for September 2018.