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Emma Hardy-Smith
Pawlett Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hardy-Smith

Special measures monitoring inspection of Pawlett Primary School

Following my visit with Faye Bertham, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 17–18 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 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 March 2017. 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 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 governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently secure the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school by:
 - ensuring that supervision of pupils at lunchtimes is adequate
 - insisting that referrals of safeguarding concerns are timely and that record-keeping meets requirements
 - ensuring that health and safety requirements are secure and fire safety regulations met.
- Urgently improve leadership and management so that they are consistently good by:
 - ensuring that pupils have equal access to teaching by qualified staff
 - equipping leaders to take effective action to eliminate inadequate teaching
 - measuring pupils' progress from their starting points to eradicate any underachievement quickly
 - insisting that teachers' assessment is accurate and that teachers use it to plan work to meet pupils' needs
 - ensuring that governors robustly hold leaders to account for performance across the whole school and that they know the impact that teaching has on pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment urgently by ensuring that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve in reading, writing and mathematics
 - set work that challenges pupils and deepens their understanding so that middle-attaining pupils and the most able pupils make good progress in writing
 - consistently and effectively deploy and manage teaching assistants.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by ensuring that teaching is demanding enough so that persistent, low-level disruption and disrespectful behaviour in lessons are eradicated.
- Swiftly improve provision in the early years by ensuring that:
 - curriculum requirements are met
 - learning environments are fit for purpose
 - assessment is accurate and used to build on children's knowledge and skills so that they make good progress.

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 17 April 2018 to 18 April 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents alongside senior leaders. An inspector met with the primary phase adviser from The Priory Learning Trust and held a telephone conversation with a local authority officer. She also conducted a meeting with the chair of the governing body.

Inspectors evaluated procedures for safeguarding and the monitoring of attendance and behaviour.

Inspectors observed pupils throughout the school day, visited classes and carried out several joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out a scrutiny of mathematics and writing books with the headteacher. Inspectors listened to pupils read. Discussions were held formally and informally with pupils throughout the two days. Inspectors met with parents and carers on both days. An inspector attended an assembly.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a teacher has gone on maternity leave and the school's special educational needs coordinator has left. The headteacher has now taken on this role. The key stage 2 class is currently taught on a part-time basis by the headteacher and a supply teacher. The early years/key stage 1 class is also taught by a supply teacher. All teachers, including the headteacher, are on temporary contracts. Leaders have invested in an additional member of staff at lunchtimes to supervise so that pupils are safe. The Priory Learning Trust (TPLT) continues to be involved informally with the leadership and strategic direction of the school, but the school remains the responsibility of the local authority.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and are tackling weaknesses steadily. The previous drift the school experienced, as a result of weak handovers of leadership, has been halted. The headteacher makes sure that everyone who works at the school understands the part they play in the school's improvement. She provides staff with clear guidance and training to develop their expertise. Consequently, staff expectations of pupils are far higher. Leaders have ensured that systems to track pupils' progress are now in place. For example, previously, assessment in the early years and key stage 1 was not in place. Teachers and leaders have an accurate understanding of what pupils know, can do and understand across all year groups. In addition, leaders have established partnerships with other schools to moderate and check teachers' assessments.

Plans for improvement are more closely linked to priorities. TPLT has worked effectively so that clear lines of accountability exist. Consequently, plans clearly identify who is doing what and by when. This has provided much-needed direction for all concerned. There is an increased sense of urgency to improve standards, because leaders have a clearer understanding of the gaps in pupils' learning. Leaders accept that there is a need to refine their plans to include pupils' outcomes now that they have established effective assessment procedures.

The governors have made good use of the training and advice they have received from both the local authority and TPLT. They now have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are beginning to hold senior leaders to account with greater rigour. In particular, governors have tackled all safeguarding issues previously identified as concerns. Additional investment has ensured that the school site is secure, and risk assessments are in place for school activities. Governors' visits to the school are now more closely linked to school improvement priorities. A date has been set for the review of governance. Governors have carried out a skills audit, which has supported them in bolstering their expertise when appointing new governors.

Parents express an increasing confidence in the school's leadership. During the inspection, individuals were keen to approach the inspectors and recount positive experiences and endorsement of the school. Parents say that communication has improved and they appreciate leaders' and teachers' work to provide them with information about the progress their children are making. In addition, parents of pupils in the early years and key stage 1 told inspectors how their children are much happier in school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the headteacher but express concerns about the temporary nature of leaders and teachers in the school. Since the last monitoring visit, the local authority has worked more closely with TLPT to make checks on the school's progress. They continue to strive towards a more permanent solution to secure the progress made so far.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching learning and assessment has improved since the previous monitoring visit. Teachers' improving understanding of pupils' different needs and abilities is enabling them to match work more closely. Teachers are planning sequences of work that build appropriately on what pupils know, understand and can do. The momentum of improvement has increased in key stage 2. Changes in the mixed early years and key stage 1 class have been more recent, but there are encouraging signs of improvement. In particular, the teaching of phonics is supporting children and pupils in key stage 1 to catch up. However, progress is slow, especially for lower-ability pupils.

Teaching assistants are making a positive difference to the pupils they work with. They have a good understanding of pupils' needs and have been instrumental in

supporting the progress pupils make. Leaders' guidance to teachers about planning and expectations has enabled better communication between staff so that pupils' needs are met. Teachers need to do more to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and lower-ability pupils make better progress. Although one-to-one support is meeting their needs, when this is not matched to work set in lessons, pupils' progress slows.

Leaders' close coaching and support for teachers is paying off. Teaching in the early years has improved. Adults interact purposefully with the children to engage and interest them. The teacher and teaching assistant work closely to ensure that activities motivate and inspire children's curiosity.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school's newly established behaviour policy at the time of the previous monitoring visit is now consistently applied. Inspectors noticed pupils' much improved demeanour. Incidents of poor behaviour are now rare. Neatly presented work in books demonstrates the pride that pupils are currently taking in their learning. Pupils engage enthusiastically in their lessons and concentrate well when work is matched to their needs. At lunch and breaktimes, pupils play cooperatively and safely. Pupils demonstrate greater resilience when working independently so that they achieve more.

Your administration staff are meticulous in keeping careful records of pupils' attendance and are quick to follow up absences to assure themselves that pupils are safe. Attendance is still below the national average, but leaders' close analysis of the issues has led to improved communication to parents about the impact of poor attendance. Holidays in term time have reduced. Leaders use the systems in place to track pupils' attendance well. However, they recognise there is more work to be done.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders have an accurate knowledge of pupils' attainment in all year groups. Teachers' better planning for pupils' needs is reducing the number of gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. However, pupils are not yet making the rapid gains they need to catch up. More of the most able pupils are making greater strides in progress as a result of teachers' higher expectations. Leaders accept there is still more to do to ensure that more pupils reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's small cohort sizes (10 or less) make national comparisons inappropriate. However, compared to a similar number of pupils last year, more pupils are on track to reach the expected standards this year in reading, writing, mathematics and phonics.

Leaders have implemented systems to check how well children in the early years are learning. This work is at an early stage. Staff are still getting to grips with

making effective use of the assessment information they have gained so that children make swift progress. However, children are now much more confident in class. They approach activities eagerly. Staff have developed a safe and purposeful learning environment indoors and out. The greatest progress has been made in the teaching of phonics. As a result, more children know and can apply their sounds to read and write with increasing accuracy.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has improved its support for the school. A local authority officer makes regular checks on the school's progress towards improvement priorities. 'Core group' meetings take place on a monthly basis. These meetings enable the local authority, governors and representatives from TPLT to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions and to determine future priorities. Consequently, the school's action plan is fit for purpose and the impetus for improvement has been boosted.

Senior leaders from TPLT have been effective in stabilising this small school. In particular, they have supported systems and roles and supported the headteacher in clarifying roles and responsibilities of staff so that staff meet the expectations identified in their job descriptions. In addition, the headteacher has benefited from the support of an experienced headteacher within the trust. The school improvement officer has been successful in supporting leaders to establish systems for making checks on teachers' performance. Now systems are in place and the school is functioning as it should, Currently, senior leaders from TPLT recognise the need to increase the accountability measures going forward.