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Jeni Houghton
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Dear Mrs Houghton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hawthorn Park Community Primary

Following my visit with Parveen Qureshi, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 24–25 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 January 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 post-Ofsted action plan and development plan is fit for purpose.

The school may 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 Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use assessment effectively to plan lessons and activities that challenge pupils
 - greater levels of challenge are provided for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
 - teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils' learning
 - teachers provide feedback, in line with the school's marking policy, that helps pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - making more regular checks on the quality of pupils' work to ensure that it matches the assessment information provided by teachers
 - ensuring that subject leaders are held fully to account for their role in securing improvements
 - providing pupils with a rich and broad curriculum
 - ensuring that governors are provided with the information they need to challenge school leaders and hold them to account for securing the necessary improvements.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - raising teachers' awareness of what pupils can achieve in subjects across the curriculum
 - providing more effective support for those pupils who are disadvantaged
 - improving the provision made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - improving overall attendance by significantly reducing the number of pupils who miss school frequently
 - ensuring that all teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 24 April 2018 to 25 April 2018.

Evidence

During this inspection, inspectors visited all classrooms, including Nursery and Reception, jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with leaders to review information about safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, and the provision for disadvantaged pupils and for those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In addition, inspectors also met pupils and spoke with governors and a representative from the local authority. The statement of action and the school's post-Ofsted action plan and current improvement plan were evaluated. Inspectors also scrutinised information relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning, Parent View, the external review of governance, the recent external review of the use of pupil premium funding and minutes from school meetings, including governing body records of visits and meeting minutes.

Context

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in staffing. Where teachers have left, leaders have faced major challenges to retain and recruit high-quality staff. During this summer term there are a number of temporary teachers in place. In addition to this, both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher undertake a regular teaching commitment in Year 6. The assistant headteacher and early years leader are currently absent from school.

The leadership structure has been revised. A number of leaders are relatively new to their role. Both the current deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher were not new to the school but were promoted to their leadership roles. The deputy headteacher as from September 2017, and the assistant headteacher effective from January 2016. Key stage 1 and 2 leaders are in place and some curriculum subject leaders have recently taken on their role. To further increase leadership capacity, an additional assistant headteacher has been successfully appointed and starts at Hawthorn Park in May 2018. Her primary role will be as inclusion leader. This will relieve the headteacher of the temporary position of special educational needs coordinator she has been covering since September 2016.

As part of checking leaders' work, the local authority carried out a 'scoping audit' visit in November 2017. Additionally, a representative from the Department for Education (DfE) visited the school in February 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders, including governors, demonstrate the commitment and motivation required to improve the school. With

support, leaders are working together effectively to identify accurately the strengths and areas for development. With varying pace and success, leaders are dealing with the many issues highlighted following the previous inspection. The local authority statement of action and leaders' post-Ofsted action plan are fit for purpose and are both being reviewed regularly to secure continual improvement.

The headteacher has implemented a systematic, structured programme of monitoring and evaluation so leaders have a consistent approach towards raising standards. Other leaders, such as the deputy headteacher and the English and mathematics leaders, now conduct reviews of pupils' work in books, carry out visits to classrooms and scrutiny of teachers' planning. However, leadership in the wider curriculum is still a work in progress. While subjects like personal, social and health education have been reviewed and are consistently taught, other curriculum subjects are not yet being as well developed and monitored.

Following the previous inspection, a review of pupil premium spending was recommended and this has only taken place recently. Despite this delay, leaders are now starting to review the way that they spend funding more carefully. This work is still in its infancy and will be a focus for the next monitoring visit.

Governors, supported by a national leader of governance, and strengthened further by the recruitment of experienced governors, are diligent and determined in their desire to improve standards for pupils. They understand the urgency required and are keen to learn quickly about how their strategic role can make that happen. They are now posing more rigorous challenge to leaders and are starting to be able to identify accurately what they need to do to improve.

Leaders consult with parents effectively. The 'parent forum' and 'nurture network' groups are opportunities that parents value. Leaders share the progress they are making towards improving the provision for pupils and this is contributing towards more effective, positive working partnerships with parents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. They are all too aware that this requires significant improvement if pupils are to achieve as well as they should.

Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is allowing them to support teachers' specific professional development needs. Where underperformance has been identified, school leaders have dealt with this as a matter of urgency. Staff appreciate the time that leaders have invested into helping them improve. They feel that this is making a difference to their practice. However, leaders' feedback to teachers is not yet focusing precisely enough on the progress that pupils make from their varied starting points.

Although there are early signs of improvement, too many teachers do not use what they know about what pupils can do to plan work which takes pupils' learning forward. In addition to this, when pupils show that they have understood and achieved an activity during a lesson, scrutiny of books shows that teachers do not consistently respond to this learning. This leads to instances whereby pupils complete more of the same or similar work and are not sufficiently challenged to develop, extend and apply their learning.

Where teaching has higher expectations of what pupils can do, interesting and challenging work enthuses pupils to learn more effectively. For example, pupils in a Year 1 class learning about suffixes were excited about being able to explain the meaning and give examples to the teacher. The teacher used appropriately targeted questions to deepen pupils' learning about suffixes. This teaching built on pupils' previous learning, including the use of accurate vocabulary and the teacher's expectation that pupils would explain their thought process.

Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities remains variable. Since the previous inspection the headteacher has worked hard to develop teachers' knowledge and understanding and to train teaching assistants in more effective ways to support pupils. This is starting to have a positive impact upon the quality of provision some teaching assistants offer to pupils. In some classes, teachers deploy support staff effectively and provide specific direction to support pupils well. In other classes, support staff are not used as well, and through this lack of direction become less effective in supporting pupils, resulting in pupils making slower progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are polite, courteous and welcoming of visitors to their school. They are confident and keen to share what they are learning. During a class assembly, Year 3 pupils enthusiastically talked to the audience, including parents, about their learning and gave examples to show they understood, such as reciting of number bonds to 100 and explanations about how plants grow.

Leaders' focus on ensuring that pupils' personal, social and emotional needs are met is successfully helping the most vulnerable pupils access their learning and develop improving attitudes towards their work. For example, the nurture group provision provides individualised programmes of support to help pupils who require additional help to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Staff are now using the behaviour policy with greater consistency and this is ensuring that challenging behaviour is being managed more effectively. Leaders have carried out much work developing a new behaviour policy and an approach to managing behaviour. This was implemented in September 2017 and is currently being reviewed and updated ready for September 2018. The impact of this work on behaviour will be a focus for the next monitoring inspection.

Following an external attendance review in March 2017, leaders successfully implemented more rigorous systems to monitor the attendance of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who are persistently absent. There is now an effective, systematic approach that includes working closely with families to improve attendance. Additionally, the importance of attending school regularly has a high profile throughout the school. For example, good attendance is celebrated regularly in assemblies, in newsletters and within classes. Pupils are proud when their class achieves the best attendance. As a result of this relentless work, the most up-to-date attendance information shows an upward trend across the whole school. Furthermore, there is also a decrease in the levels of persistent absence of identified groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

The provision in Nursery and Reception continues to be effective. Scrutiny of children's learning journeys and observations of the children accessing tasks verify that children are continuing to achieve well. The good transition between Nursery and Reception ensures that children settle well, are happy and are being well prepared for Year 1.

Leaders recognise that pupils are still not making the progress they are capable of in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Leaders acknowledge that the biggest barrier to raising standards in classrooms is teachers' weak use of assessment to plan learning that is appropriate for the ability of pupils in the lesson. This remains an urgent priority for school leaders. This is also apparent in the wider curriculum across the school. There are still far too few opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills across other subjects. In addition to this, the large majority of activities that teachers give to pupils do not enable them to develop their writing and mathematical skills adequately.

External support

School leaders and staff have embraced the significant support provided, and brokered by the local authority. This has consisted of regular local authority school improvement partner visits, staff training courses, support from English and mathematics consultants and the inclusion of a national leader of governance on the governing body. Additionally, the guidance and knowledge provided by a national leader of education has brought about rigorous challenge to support leaders in bringing about effective improvements.

This external support has been effective in supporting senior leaders and governors in pinpointing priorities accurately and in implementing effective systems. From the very low starting point identified in the previous inspection, there has been a significant amount of work completed to secure firmer, consistent foundations upon

which to build rapid improvements that will support the school towards the removal of special measures within the required timescale.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they make improving teaching, learning and assessment a priority throughout the school, focusing on ensuring that teachers rapidly develop their knowledge and understanding of fundamental teaching and learning skills
- their monitoring is frequent and rigorously checks the accuracy of the assessment information, particularly focusing on the progress pupils make from their starting points
- they develop leadership of subjects within the wider curriculum, so all leaders are contributing effectively to raising standards at Hawthorn Park.