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Mr Steve Nash
Headteacher
The Grove Primary School
Asfordby Road
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Leicestershire
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Dear Mr Nash

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Grove Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 15–16 May 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 academy'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 July 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 statement of action, which is also the academy's improvement plan, is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lawson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders and governors identify clear, precise and measurable actions in their improvement plans
 - senior leaders implement an assessment system that accurately measures pupils' progress, and quickly identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind
 - senior leaders establish an accurate view of the quality of teaching, provide teachers with high-quality schemes of work and tailor teachers' professional development and training to target the needs of individual teachers
 - middle leaders develop their roles so that they support senior leaders in making whole-school improvements
 - senior leaders and governors use the additional funding effectively to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - senior leaders and governors use the school's physical education and sports premium funding effectively
 - governors make sure that the school's website meets the requirements for the publication of statutory information
 - academy trustees and governors increase the school's effectiveness in improving the quality of teaching and its impact on accelerating pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all pupils make good progress or better, by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide pupils with a purpose to their learning
 - plan activities that are matched more accurately to the needs and abilities of different pupils, including the small number of most-able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - help pupils more consistently to understand how to be successful learners
 - develop their skills in asking probing questions that check on the pupils' understanding and stimulate pupils' thinking
 - provide pupils with opportunities to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics and comprehension skills in reading
 - provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and to demonstrate sustained knowledge.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning by ensuring that:
 - all staff have the highest expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and apply the school's behaviour policy consistently
 - senior leaders use the behaviour-tracking system to identify targeted and measurable actions which will reduce the high number of behaviour incidents and fixed-term exclusions
 - leaders develop more effective ways of working with parents to increase pupils' attendance
 - teaching increases pupils' engagement and confidence, so that they play a greater role in their own learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of the early years provision by ensuring that leaders:
 - identify and tackle all areas of weakness, especially boys' slow progress
 - develop the outdoor learning environment to provide purposeful learning activities which contribute to developing a range of skills, including literacy and numeracy.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 15 May 2018 to 16 May 2018

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the two deputy headteachers, one of whom is the leader of the early years. I met with subject leaders, members of the local governing board, the chief executive officer and the executive headteacher of the Mowbray Education Trust. I also met with the Trust lead coordinator for provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and her colleague. I scrutinised pupils' work with you and the deputy headteachers, and you and I observed teaching in nine lessons. I spoke with parents and carers at the beginning of the day and with pupils informally at breaktimes as well as meeting a group of pupils. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at breaktimes, lunchtimes and in between lessons. I also scrutinised a range of documents, including the academy's plans for improvement and documents relating to safeguarding.

Context

There have been significant changes in leadership, governance and teaching staff since the previous inspection. You were appointed as the substantive headteacher in August 2017. Since that time, two new deputy headteachers have also been appointed. One, who joined the academy in November 2017, is the new leader and part-time teacher for the early years. The other deputy headteacher joined the academy in March 2018. Two new class teachers have also been appointed to replace teachers who have left the academy. Very nearly all the members of the local governing board have changed, including the chair. A new assistant headteacher, who will also be the coordinator for provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, has been appointed to start in September 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You are addressing effectively some of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Members of staff, parents and pupils spoke of the improvements made since the appointments of you and the new deputy headteachers. Pupils in key stage 2 who I spoke with were unanimous that the academy has improved. One said: 'Teachers work hard. It's getting much better. Learning is getting better.' Staff say morale is now much higher. They say that they feel supported by leaders and that the academy is a much nicer place. You and other senior leaders have brought ambition to the academy. You are effectively creating a culture of raised expectations to tackle the legacy of weak teaching, weak leadership, pupils' underachievement and poor behaviour.

You have introduced many new initiatives and systems. You have ensured that considerable improvements have been made to standards of behaviour. The quality

of teaching is improving. However, some initiatives are at an early stage of development and are not yet having significant impact on pupils' attainment and progress throughout the academy. In some areas, the pace of improvement is not as rapid as it could be. Nonetheless, senior leaders demonstrate their strong capacity to drive improvement. The improvements in behaviour have created the conditions that allow teachers to teach more effectively and enable pupils to do better. The academy is now well placed to focus sharply on ensuring that the improvements you are making to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment impact securely on accelerating pupils' progress and raising their attainment.

At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to identify clear, precise and measurable actions in their improvement plans. The academy's improvement plan is fit for purpose because it prioritises areas for improvement from the previous inspection. It details the range of initiatives introduced and actions taken. However, it does not focus sharply enough on measurable targets for pupils' attainment and progress, including those who are disadvantaged, the most able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. The pupil premium plan, sports action plan and plans to improve the impact of provision in the early years also do not include precise and measurable actions linked to pupils' attainment and progress. As a result, progress in some areas has been less effective.

Leaders were asked to develop an accurate system to measure pupils' progress. You ensure that staff receive training to improve their expertise in accurately assessing pupils' learning. You hold regular meetings with staff to review the progress of pupils in each class, and identify pupils who are falling behind. You are confident that the accuracy of assessment information is improving. You also recognise that it is crucial that this work continues and that teachers use the assessment information effectively. This will allow them to plan lessons and work that are matched well to pupils' abilities and needs, and will enable leaders to set accurate and ambitious targets for improvement.

Little progress has been made to develop the effectiveness of middle and subject leaders. Changes in staffing have undoubtedly presented challenges. However, subject leaders have not had sufficient training. Some roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined. Middle and subject leaders are not yet effective in bringing about whole-school improvements that impact on pupils' attainment and progress. They do not create focused action plans for their areas of responsibility. This is a priority you plan to focus on in the next academic year. You have planned training with a teaching school alliance to develop middle as well as senior leadership roles in the next academic year. It is important that this aspect of leadership and management is strengthened as rapidly as possible.

Leaders and governors were asked to use additional funding effectively to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You have further identified that provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a significant area of weakness. In the past, pupils' needs have not been identified

accurately and the impact of support has not been checked. Leaders cannot be sure that the additional funding to support these pupils is being used effectively. Leaders, with the support of the Trust, as well as local authority guidance, are now working urgently to tackle these issues. They are rapidly establishing systems and procedures to better meet pupils' needs. A new coordinator of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities will be joining the academy in September. It is vital that this work proceeds rapidly.

The review of the pupil premium has not yet taken place. Leaders' view is that they wished to make improvements in standards of behaviour, teaching and assessment in preparation for the review. However, leaders, the local governing board and the Trust cannot be sure that the pupil premium is having the maximum impact. The pupil premium plan is not sharply linked to raising disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress. It is imperative that leaders act on the findings of the review planned to take place in June. Leaders and governors also cannot be sure that the additional funding for physical education (PE) and sports is being used effectively. Leaders have not clarified who is responsible for this aspect of the academy's work. Again, plans for the use of the funding do not identify measurable outcomes to improve, for example, the quality of teaching or pupils' participation in PE and sports.

The members of the essentially new local governing board have a wide range of experience. They regularly visit the academy and meet leaders. The minutes of their meetings show they sometimes ask challenging questions. However, leaders, the Trust and the local governing board have not ensured that the review of governance has taken place. The Trust's view is that the governing board needed sufficient time to establish themselves. However, some ground has been lost. The governing board is not as effective as it should be in holding leaders to account for the attainment and progress made by different groups of pupils. Nor is it ensuring that the website meets requirements or checking the impact of additional funding. Aspects of the school's website were updated during the inspection. It is crucial that the planned review in June is completed in order to create a plan of action to ensure the effectiveness of the governing board.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is inconsistent, but improving. Since your appointment, you have been committed to tackling underperformance and weak teaching. At the previous inspection, leaders were asked to establish an accurate view of the quality of teaching. You have introduced a more robust approach. You regularly observe teachers and provide them with feedback that identifies clearly the strengths and aspects that they need to improve. You ensure that staff receive appropriate training and support. You have strengthened the performance management process. Targets for the management of teachers' performance are now much sharper. However, they do not link clearly enough to specific groups of pupils, including the most able or those who are disadvantaged, to more effectively hold staff to account.

Teachers generally have secure subject knowledge. Some teachers use effective questioning, resources and imagery to support pupils' learning. They remind pupils' of their previous learning. The structure of some lessons enables pupils to develop their understanding in a logical manner. However, in others, teachers do not make effective use of lesson time. Teachers generally encourage pupils to take increasing care over the presentation of their work. Teachers now far more effectively and consistently manage behaviour.

There is evidence of the impact of whole-school initiatives, such as work to improve teaching and learning in mathematics. Teachers often make use of visual imagery to support pupils' understanding. There is evidence in some classes of teachers providing pupils with opportunities to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics. However, this is very inconsistent. In some classes, there is very little evidence of this work.

Work to develop pupils' comprehension skills is at a very early stage of development. The academy's books have been better organised and there is a new library. Additional resources have been purchased and staff training is planned. Leaders have introduced class novels as a vehicle to teach reading and writing. This was observed in a class in key stage 2, in which pupils were planning to write a diary entry based on their class novel. This strengthened pupils' understanding of the text and helped them to make links between reading and writing. Leaders' promotion of pupils' reading comprehension skills is a key priority for the next academic year.

Throughout the academy, teachers often give pupils choice over the level of difficulty of their work. Where this is more effective, pupils are able to reflect on their learning and then choose the work that is most appropriate to their needs. Work in pupils' books, however, shows that work is often not matched well to pupils' needs. Teachers' expectations of what pupils' can achieve are often still too low. Teachers often do not act on information about pupils' learning rapidly enough to adapt work or teaching. Sometimes, teachers use the new 'visualisers' well to promote pupils' understanding by, for example, showing pupils' work. However, teachers often still do not make it clear exactly what pupils are expected to learn. Very little low-level disruption was observed. However, some pupils lose focus and are not engaged.

Pupils are often keen to make contributions in lessons. Some teachers are skilled in questioning pupils. However, ideas and concepts are often not explored in sufficient depth to give pupils a deeper understanding. Teachers often do not ensure that teaching assistants are deployed so as to have the maximum impact on pupils' learning. Further significant improvements in the quality of teaching are necessary to increase pupils' attainment and progress across the academy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Parents, pupils and staff all say that behaviour has improved considerably, and continues to do so. They say that the academy is now much calmer and orderly. You and other staff are tackling behaviour directly and effectively. Since the last inspection, you have revised the behaviour policy. Staff apply this consistently. You have ensured that pupils have responded excellently to the higher expectations of their behaviour. Staff use a positive approach, rewarding good behaviour, but also making clear what will happen if behaviour is not good. In lessons, in the playground, and around the academy, very little disruptive behaviour was observed and nothing that caused concern.

You monitor incidents of poor behaviour closely and put into place behaviour plans for pupils who need extra support. The 'nurture room' staff are effective in helping pupils to improve their behaviour. The number of incidents of poor behaviour, including physical incidents, have declined over the course of the year. The number of allegations of bullying are also declining. Pupils understand what bullying is and say incidents now happen far less often. While a small number of parents raised some concerns, pupils are confident that staff will resolve any worries that they may have.

The improvement in behaviour is improving pupils' personal development and welfare. Pupils are well aware of new systems in place to promote good behaviour. They understand the new 'Grove Code' academy rules and why they are important. This is encouraging pupils to make responsible choices. Pupils are polite and friendly. Pupils say that staff are fair and the school is a better place. A pupil in Year 6 said: 'People get on better. New children come in and make friends straight away.'

Pupils and parents say that the academy is safe. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when online. Parents and pupils are positive about the improvements that you have made to the security of the academy site. You have also introduced a new academy uniform, including a new logo designed by pupils. Staff encourage pupils to take more pride in the way that they present themselves and their work.

Leaders were asked to develop more effective ways of working with parents to increase pupils' attendance. You check attendance and punctuality carefully on an ongoing basis. You work with the support of the Trust's attendance leaders. You identify families of children with persistent absence and work with them to improve attendance, including home visits by the family support worker. You are working to emphasise the importance of attendance with parents and offer pupils a range of rewards. Pupils themselves told me the academy's target for attendance. However, current figures show persistent absence has increased. The attendance of all pupils, and particularly that of disadvantaged pupils, boys and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, is currently lower than at the end of 2017. You believe that the high number of fixed-term exclusions at the beginning of the year, as a result of your

work to tackle poor behaviour, affected overall figures. The number of exclusions has reduced sharply as the year has progressed. It is vital that leaders and the governing board closely review strategies to improve attendance, including the use of the pupil premium in relation to the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Overall, pupils' outcomes show slight improvement, but are still too variable. There is still weak attainment and progress in too many classes. The proportion of pupils on track to achieve the standards expected for their age at the end of key stage 2 shows improvement in reading and mathematics, but is lower in writing. The proportion of pupils on track to achieve the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is improving and close to the national average. In key stage 1, however, academy information shows that standards are likely to be lower in reading, writing and mathematics than in 2017. Academy information and pupils' work show pupils' attainment and progress are very inconsistent between different classes and subjects.

Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are able to write at length and in different subjects. The presentation of pupils' work and handwriting are generally improving. Standards of spelling, grammar and punctuation, however, are not high enough. In mathematics, many pupils make too slow progress because teachers do not match work well to their needs or move learning on quickly enough to more challenging work. Pupils' work shows that teachers do not ensure that pupils' early reading and phonics skills are sufficiently consolidated to help them make better progress in reading and writing.

Standards in the early years are improving. The new leader for the early years has ensured that the learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is well organised. Children are busy and purposeful in their learning. Routines are well established. Children showed resilience, for example, when making musical instruments linked to the sounds of the seaside. Children show good understanding of phonics. Children are able to work well independently. For example, children were observed completing a tally chart for favourite ice creams. This promoted children's mathematical counting and recording skills. Children were not sure, however, of the purpose of what they were doing.

Current academy information shows that the proportion of children on track to achieve a good level of development at the end of the early years is improving slightly compared to the end of 2017, and is likely to be in line with that seen nationally. However, current information also shows that the difference in the attainment between boys and girls in the early years may not have decreased significantly. Leaders are not as sharp as they could be in identifying how provision could be better adapted to meet the needs of all learners, based upon their analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Their plans for improvement do not set sufficiently sharp targets for improvement to drive even more rapid improvement.

External support

The Mowbray Education Trust appointed a new chief executive officer in June 2017. As a result, following the previous inspection, the Trust has acted rapidly to appoint the new headteacher. It provides effective support for the headteacher in challenging weak leadership and teaching and is supporting improvements in these areas. It is now working to rectify the deficiencies in the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

The reviews of the pupil premium and governance have not taken place. It is crucial that the Trust ensures that these take place as planned, and that recommendations are used to inform the academy's plans for improvement. It is also crucial that the Trust ensures that the local governing board is clear about its various roles and responsibilities, including in relation to holding leaders to account for the impact of additional funding.