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12 July 2018

Ms Rachel Pars  
Headteacher  
Elton Community Primary School  
Alston Street  
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Lancashire  
BL8 1SB

Dear Ms Pars

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Elton Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 26 and 27 June 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 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.

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 chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school to enable all pupils to make good or better progress by:
  - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of pupils' progress and outcomes
  - improving teachers' subject knowledge so that they are able to show and explain concepts well
  - planning lessons that engage and interest pupils
  - assessing pupils' understanding throughout lessons and adapting teaching where needed
  - ensuring that teachers' explanations and the activities set are appropriately challenging for pupils with different abilities
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length and showing pupils how to structure their writing
  - ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to explain their reasoning and use and apply their mathematical skills
  - improving the quality of provision in the early years by ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to develop their number, writing and personal social skills.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by:
  - rapidly improving the impact of leaders in improving the quality of teaching and learning
  - ensuring that the pupil premium grant is appropriately and effectively spent to rapidly raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
  - developing the quality of middle leadership so that subject leaders contribute fully to improving teaching and standards in their subject area
  - using performance management more rigorously to hold staff to account for pupils' progress and their leadership responsibilities
  - improving the impact of governors in challenging leaders to bring about rapid improvement
  - increasing pupils' attendance and reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent by engaging parents more effectively
  - ensuring that assessment procedures are robust, leaders identify any underachievement and support programmes are sharp and effective in raising attainment

- developing current initiatives to improve overall effectiveness of the school so that all pupils 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.

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 26 to 27 June 2018**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher; the deputy headteacher; the assistant headteachers, who are also the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator; a selection of subject leaders; and other members of staff. He met with the vice-chair of the governing body and the chair and the school's link member of the trust board. He also had a discussion with the executive director of education of the trust, who has been supporting the headteacher. He met with 10 pupils to find out their views about their education and welfare. The inspector carried out visits to the early years and to all year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2, which were joint activities with the headteacher. He scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's plan for improvement, records of the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. The inspector analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information. He also analysed 21 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and met with a group of four parents.

### **Context**

There have been no changes to the context of the school since the last monitoring visit.

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

Leaders continue with their strategies to secure improvement in the overall quality of education they provide. Leaders frequently monitor standards by observing teaching and analysing pupils' work. They then give staff actions to improve their practice. They visit again at a later point to ensure that teachers carry out the suggested actions. Their more rigorous approach to checking the performance of staff and ensuring they are accountable for their pupils' progress is now having a more positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils' achievement is beginning to improve as a result.

Governors have a secure view of the effectiveness of the actions senior leaders are taking to bring about improvements. Evidence in minutes of governors' meetings shows that they ask searching questions of school leaders to hold them firmly to account. These include questions about pupils' progress, the use of pupil premium funding and assessment processes. Their persistence in ensuring that senior leaders have appropriate actions in place, with a clear rationale behind them, contributes effectively to the emerging picture of improvement in pupils' achievement.

The headteacher is keen to make use of any expertise that will help the school improve. She increasingly seeks this for herself now and is no longer reliant on

support from the trust's executive director of education to commission it for her. There is now an established link with a local teaching school, which has contributed to some strong improvement in reading by the end of key stage 1 and slight improvement in key stage 2. There is some improvement in writing across the school, but it is still not strong enough.

Leaders are continuing with the strategies introduced to improve progress in mathematics. They entail a greater focus on problem-solving and reasoning. Pupils in key stage 1 make strong progress by the end of Year 2. There is evidence of some progress in key stage 2, but this is not currently strong enough, as not enough pupils reach the expected standard.

Leaders have also sought advice and support from a local school that has highly effective practice in the early years. They have made changes to the organisation of learning in the provision. These include providing 'enhanced' tasks for children to attempt, which stretch them to a greater extent than previously. They have also established the 'rainbow challenge', in which staff encourage children to complete a set of challenges, colour-coded to match those in a rainbow. Children who complete the set each week receive a certificate. These actions have helped to bring about strong improvement in the progress of children in the early years.

Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics have now begun to carry out checks on the standards and the quality of teaching in their subjects. There are new systems in place for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Staff have begun to enter relevant assessment information into the new tracking system. Although leaders still do not have a thorough enough understanding of standards in their subject, this is improving.

The chair of the trust board has a clear view of the impact of leaders' actions so far. He understands that there has been success in some areas, such as the strong progress in the early years, in phonics in Year 1 and reading and mathematics in key stage 1. However, he recognises that progress in key stage 2 is slower than in other year groups and that improvement is not yet sustained enough.

The school continues to receive support from the executive director of education, but her involvement is far less direct than before. She provides advice and guidance to the headteacher, but now visits the school for no more than half a day each week. The executive director of education has an accurate view of the work of school.

Leaders ensure that all safeguarding procedures are thorough and fit for purpose. Records of concerns are detailed and the school's checks on members of staff meet the government's requirements. Staff receive regular training and have appropriate knowledge of the various signs of abuse.

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

Senior leaders have persisted with their strategies to improve the quality of teaching, with some success. Their new approach to reading, for example, which they have introduced with the support of a local teaching school, has resulted in good progress for children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1. Leaders also continue to emphasise the importance of problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics. In both these subjects, the proportion of pupils in Year 2 in 2018 who reached the expected standard has risen considerably since last year. It is now close to or slightly above the national average.

Leaders' strategies are yet to have a strong effect on pupils' progress in key stage 2. Typically, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is below the national average. Nevertheless, improvement in current pupils' achievement is evident across year groups, compared to the start of the year. In Year 6, for example, about seven out of 10 pupils are now working at the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders do not currently have validated evidence to confirm these pupils' achievement.

Teachers continue to use the school's 'learning journeys', in which pupils choose the level of difficulty at which they begin the work they do unsupported by the teacher. This is now better organised and pupils no longer deliberately choose easier starting points. Teachers are increasingly effective in ensuring that work for most pupils matches their needs and abilities, although the work they provide for the most able does not challenge them consistently enough. Teachers are more effective now in helping pupils to work through their misconceptions.

Staff ensure that pupils continue to have opportunities to write at length and in different styles. Current pupils have developed their skills well compared to the start of the school year, but their progress is not strong enough to result in sufficient numbers performing close to the expected standard.

Teachers mostly now plan activities that interest pupils and keep their attention. They also have increasingly secure subject knowledge. Teachers' expectations of pupils have mainly improved. There is some evidence, however, of teachers not maximising learning time for pupils, especially the most able. For example, some tasks require pupils to write work out elsewhere before copying it into their books. Also, the structure of some work in writing for the most able does not enable them to make their own decisions about the content or length of the work. Consequently, they miss the opportunity to deepen their understanding.

There has been considerable improvement in the progress of children in the early years. Moderated assessment information shows that the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development this year has risen to close to the national average. The early years leaders are very clear about standards in the provision. They analyse children's performance effectively and identify gaps in learning that

they need to address. Leaders have identified a local school that has strong practice in the early years and have adapted strategies they acquired from there. These include the introduction of focused challenges for children and more purposeful organisation for the outdoor area. These actions have contributed to strong improvement in children's progress this year.

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

Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe, for example, when on the internet. Pupils say that there are very few examples of bullying of any kind. They are confident in adults' ability to manage any concerns they may have.

Pupils continue to behave well and show mostly positive attitudes to learning. Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that teachers manage behaviour well. Leaders' strategies have resulted in fewer fixed-term exclusions in the current year and the number of serious behaviour incidents is falling.

Throughout the inspection, pupils demonstrated typically good conduct around school. Pupils who spoke with the inspector, both formally and informally, were polite and articulate.

Leaders have a range of actions in place to reduce rates of pupils' absence. These include rewards for pupils who have high attendance and prompt communication with parents of pupils whose attendance is a concern. Rates of absence and persistent absence have reduced somewhat since last year. Although pupils' attendance is now quite close to the national average, persistent absence is still too high.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Leaders' strategies to improve pupils' outcomes through higher quality teaching are having a positive effect. This is stronger in some year groups and subjects than others. For example, current pupils in Year 2 make strong progress in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in 2018 is close to the national average. Pupils in Year 2 have also improved their performance in writing, although the proportion reaching the expected standard is still below average.

Pupils continue to achieve well in the phonics screening check in Year 1, with a high proportion reaching the expected standard. In the early years, the proportion of current children achieving a good level of development is close to the national average. This represents good progress from children's starting points and is a considerable improvement on performance in 2017.

The progress of pupils in key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics is not as strong. Typically, not enough current pupils reach the expected standard for their



age in reading, writing and mathematics. However, there has been some improvement this year, which shows that leaders' actions are starting to have a positive effect. In writing in Year 5, for example, pupils show an increasing use of more adventurous vocabulary, such as the appropriate use of words like 'vicious' and 'suspiciously'. However, they still lack some control in their sentence structure, with a tendency to make sentences overly long.

The school's most recent assessment information, coupled with evidence from pupils' work, shows that pupils currently in Year 6 have improved in key subjects this year, compared with their performance at the end of Year 5. However, the school still awaits validated assessment information for this year group.

The progress of pupils who are disadvantaged is improving. Leaders use a range of strategies, including providing extra support in English and mathematics for individual pupils or small groups. However, progress is not yet strong enough to diminish the difference sufficiently between these pupils and other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

Children's progress in the early years has improved, with nearly seven out of 10 children achieving a good level of development in 2018.

### **External support**

Senior leaders have commissioned support from a local teaching school and another school that is able to demonstrate strong practice in the early years. They have adapted teaching methods from these schools to improve reading across the school and the provision in the early years.