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17 July 2018

Mr Wayne Roberts  
Bere Regis School  
Southbrook  
Bere Regis  
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Dear Mr Roberts

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Bere Regis School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 to 5 July 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 April 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Nathan Kemp  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school by ensuring that teachers:
  - set the highest expectations for all pupils and refuse to tolerate low-quality work
  - use assessment information effectively to plan opportunities and set appropriately challenging work for pupils and children in the early years, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able pupils
  - check pupils' understanding and knowledge and take the right steps in building pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding
  - know how to deepen pupils' mathematical thinking and reasoning, especially in applying efficient methods of calculation and problem solving
  - rapidly develop pupils' reading and writing skills, including spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting, across the curriculum.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - governors fully understand their roles and responsibilities in holding school leaders to account
  - governors have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, especially in terms of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school
  - the school's assessment system is used to inform teaching and learning, including for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - the full range of senior leaders are able to lead effectively, including those who have specific responsibility for special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils
  - there is the capacity to improve through effective middle leaders, including subject leadership
  - the curriculum deepens pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding as well as promoting a wider enjoyment for pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6.

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 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 first monitoring inspection on 4 July 2018 to 5 July 2018**

### **Evidence**

The lead inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the governing body, the mathematics and literacy leader, the early years leader and the leader responsible for the implementation and impact of pupil premium funding. Also, the inspector met with a representative from the local authority.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a new deputy headteacher, who is also responsible for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Governors have undertaken a review which inspectors recommended at the last inspection. This has resulted in a change to roles and responsibilities. The governing body has reduced in number and has appointed a new chair of governors. School leaders have undertaken a pupil premium review, which inspectors recommended at the last inspection.

The school is in the advanced stages of becoming a sponsored academy; it is likely that this will be completed in time for the new academic year.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have taken effective action towards the removal of special measures. Leaders and governors wasted no time and acted swiftly on the inspection findings. Within one term of the previous inspection, governors completed a review into governance, and subsequent restructuring took place. This resulted in a new chair of governors and a more focused, streamlined governing body. Governors were quick to admit that the school's performance was well below par and took it upon themselves to improve in their areas of responsibility.

The governing body is now knowledgeable about the school's performance. Governors use up-to-date tracking information to inform their discussions and, through this, can raise questions and challenge for school leaders. The governing body has transformed. Through their work, governors are establishing an effective strand of leadership which was significantly lacking at the time of the previous inspection. However, governors do not check that teachers' assessment information correlates closely with school leaders' evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment. Furthermore, where specific pupil groups may be underperforming, they do not yet seek detailed analysis about this and act upon findings.

The headteacher has galvanised the staff team. Through his calm yet aspirational approach, he has ensured that the school is moving in the right direction. He has

appointed a new deputy headteacher. Despite her absence during the monitoring visit, it was clear from talking to staff that she has had a strong impact on raising pupils' outcomes at Bere Regis school. Her work to redesign a curriculum, which was an area for improvement at the previous inspection, will be in place for the beginning of the next academic year. These plans are thorough and, if implementation is successful, will provide much-needed structure and opportunities for pupils to apply their skills across the curriculum. The early years leader also adds some much-needed strength to leadership. She has taken on the pre-school with the aim of improving children's outcomes when they start in the Reception Year. Furthermore, her high expectations of children will serve as a strong baseline as children move through the school.

The headteacher has greatly improved the school's assessment information. This has been pivotal in developing a greater understanding of pupils' progress across the school. The headteacher has cascaded this information to leaders, furthering their awareness of standards in their areas of responsibility. Securing this has increased leaders' awareness of pupils' performance, which was vital. Leaders are not yet using this information to its fullest. They do not use this information routinely to inform their monitoring, particularly when observing in classrooms and scrutinising pupils' books. Furthermore, leaders are not yet secure in what effective pupils' progress looks like. Much of this is due to inconsistencies in the approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

Subject leaders are acting more effectively now but there is still much to do. They are effusive about the support of the headteacher. Much of their focus has been on raising teachers' expectations of pupils, particularly in presentation and handwriting. This aspect of their work has improved. However, leaders do not closely monitor the standards in their subjects. Much emphasis has been on tracking and monitoring teachers' actions. This has taken priority over the impact of actions on learning and improving pupils' progress.

In both writing and mathematics, there is a lack of consistency in how adults teach these subjects. Leaders acknowledge that the approach to teaching writing and mathematics remains unclear. Teachers are teaching these subjects in their own way. When conducting a scrutiny of pupils' books, it quickly became clear that ascertaining pupils' progress was extremely difficult. Leaders understand that until a common approach to teaching these subjects is in place, inconsistencies remain a prevalent feature in books. Leaders have plans in place, now, to improve this aspect of their work.

The newly appointed deputy headteacher has tightened up the approach to supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Pupils' targets were previously vague and lacked precision. Leaders have made improvements, but these are still in their infancy. There is a more vigilant approach to monitoring and reviewing pupils' work, but the impact on pupils' progress over time remains unclear. Leaders are taking appropriate steps to improve this aspect of their work.

The leadership of the pupil premium has improved. Due to low numbers of disadvantaged pupils, leaders are evaluating the use of the pupil premium on an individual basis. Leaders know pupils extremely well. This has strengthened the precision of the work, particularly when identifying specific support. Leaders' assessment information shows that many disadvantaged pupils have made improved progress over the academic year.

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

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment still varies considerably. In the Reception class, children are given a good start to their education. Teachers consider children's emerging needs and adults plan activities carefully so children can improve further.

Across the school, teachers have raised their expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting. Pupils present their books with improved pride. However, there is evidence of pupils repeating learning unnecessarily. While teachers consider the demands of the national curriculum, they do not reflect carefully enough on what pupils can do already. This is evident mostly in mathematics. Teachers are not taking into account what pupils know already, so they provide learning activities that are low in expectation and lack challenge. Leaders have identified the need to improve this aspect of their work.

Pupils' writing is improving but a lack of a cohesive approach to the teaching of writing is hindering pupils' progress. There is a lack of clarity when teachers plan lessons. Sequences of lessons are confused and do not build on pupils' emerging needs. There are few opportunities for pupils to practise their writing. On these occasions, they complete only a few sentences or paragraphs. Teachers are 'ticking off' objectives from the national curriculum but are not thinking beyond this. Teachers require pupils to write across a range of genres, such as newspaper writing or diary extracts, with little opportunity to learn what constitutes an effective piece of writing. In addition, teachers are not responding to pupils' needs. As a result, they do not consider whether pupils have already demonstrated knowledge in a specific area. This results in a lack of challenge borne out of historically low expectations.

Some teaching in the school lacks precision. Often, activities do not match the intended learning and resources are of poor quality. Teachers do not take sufficient care when selecting resources to ensure that they are well matched to pupils' capabilities. In some cases, this slows pupils' progress and causes confusion. Teachers do not plan lessons and sequences of lessons carefully with pupils central to the decision-making.

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

Current figures show that pupils' attendance is above national averages. This is the case for disadvantaged pupils too. When pupils are in school, they conduct themselves well and are welcoming to visitors.

Pupils' attitudes to learning still require improvement. Leaders' actions have improved the level of pride seen in pupils' books, particularly in presentation and handwriting. The introduction of pupils' pen licence has helped towards this. However, in lessons, there are times when pupils 'switch off' from their learning. They opt to hold conversations with their peers which do not link to the activity taking place. This results in a lack of focus and pupils' engagement with activities decreases. In some cases, teachers do not notice this. Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons are not high enough.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

In 2016, pupils' outcomes were particularly poor. For example, only 7% of pupils met expectations for their age in writing by the end of key stage 2, and progress across reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below national averages. In 2017, pupils' progress improved but more so in reading and writing.

By the end of the Reception Year, more pupils are exceeding the early learning goals. It is evident that the stretch and challenge for children in the Reception Year have improved. An increasing number of children are demonstrating their 'readiness' for Year 1. Children have increasing opportunities to write about their own experiences while applying features such as conjunctions to their writing. Letters are well formed and of a suitable size. Most children are capable of using capital letters and full stops correctly to signal the beginning and end of a sentence. In mathematics, children can answer addition and subtraction problems while identifying the correct number represented by a set of objects.

Across the school, current pupils' progress continues to improve, with tracking information showing a further increase in the proportion of pupils working at expectations for their age. Leaders have prioritised improving progress for most able pupils so that a greater proportion are working at the higher standard. It is clear that this is a warranted focus; pupils' books demonstrate a lack of challenge for these pupils. Furthermore, in mathematics, pupils have few opportunities to apply their reasoning and problem-solving knowledge. Often, this results in pupils needlessly completing learning that lacks challenge and only taxes pupils on their number fluency.

Pupils do not have regular opportunities to apply what they have learned to their writing. While the local authority has moderated teachers' judgements of pupils' writing, it is clear that further improvements are needed. Due to the lack of consistency in the teaching of writing, pupils' progress stalls and, on too many

occasions, pupils repeat basic errors. For example, pupils in key stages 1 and 2 apply capital letters and full stops incorrectly while children in the Reception Year are already demonstrating these skills.

### **External support**

The local authority has supported the school since the previous inspection. They monitored the governors' action plan to ensure that it was fit for purpose and would have the intended impact. Furthermore, the local authority has supported school leaders with the headteacher's performance review.