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Mrs J Leishman
Principal
The Hill Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs Leishman

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Hill Primary Academy

Following my visit with Andrew Taylor, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4 and 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2016. 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.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the transition monitoring board (TMB), the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2016.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - timelines in action plans are met and improvements are then monitored rigorously to ensure they are effective
 - governors hold leaders to account for timelines and the effectiveness of improvements
 - middle leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and early years leader, have the skills and knowledge so that they are more effective in carrying out their roles
 - accurate information is gathered on pupils' attainment so that it can be used to follow pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning
 - safeguarding is more effective, including improved monitoring and successful implementation of procedures
 - a new marking policy is implemented effectively so that teachers give pupils feedback that will help them improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' achievements by ensuring that teachers:
 - use accurate information on pupils' attainment to plan their lessons so that they can identify and meet pupils' different abilities and learning needs
 - deploy extra adults more effectively to promote pupils' learning.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - a greater proportion of pupils attend school more regularly
 - teachers and more pupils follow the guidance and procedures as noted in the behaviour policy.
- Improve outcomes and ensure the welfare of pupils in the early years by ensuring that:
 - all welfare requirements are consistently met and any risks are quickly identified and addressed
 - leaders and managers in the early years are effective in identifying and prioritising actions to improve provision
 - an accurate assessment system is fully and effectively implemented and it is used to inform teaching and promote improved outcomes.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 4 July 2018 to 5 July 2018

Evidence

The inspectors met with the principal, the current head of school, a vice-principal, the consultant coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo), the SENCo designate, the new early years leader and the inclusion and safeguarding manager. In addition, the principal and the inspectors visited lessons to observe teaching, learning and assessment. A subject leader for mathematics, together with a subject leader designate, were observed evaluating the progress made by pupils in their workbooks. The inspectors also reviewed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during breaktimes and around the school site. Discussions were held with the chief executive officer (CEO) and members of the TMB, including the chair of the TMB. A telephone conversation took place with the vice-chair of trustees from the Astrea Academy Trust (the trust). The inspectors scrutinised a wide range of information, including information about pupils' attainment and progress, punctuality, attendance and behaviour. Parents discussed the school with an inspector at the beginning of the school day. In addition, an inspector held telephone discussions with parents of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Context

The principal, who is also the headteacher of another primary school within the trust, has spent increasing amounts of time at The Hill Primary Academy during the summer term. The principal will be based at The Hill on a full-time basis throughout the 2018/19 academic year.

The head of school has resigned. A new head of school has been appointed and will take up post on 1 September 2018. A vice-principal has resigned and will not be replaced.

A new SENCo/assistant principal has been appointed. A second assistant principal has been recruited to oversee the development of key stage 1 and phonics. Both will commence their duties in September.

Six new teachers have been appointed, one of whom will share the leadership of mathematics throughout the school. There will be substantive post holders in all classes in September.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Judicious actions taken to improve the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have led to notable improvements for pupils. The consultant SENCo has established systems and procedures to aid the early identification of pupils' needs. There are striking examples of closely targeted teaching and sensitive behaviour management leading to better outcomes for pupils. Pupils who have SEN and/or

disabilities attend school more regularly. The number who are excluded for fixed periods of time has reduced markedly. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities like their 'supportive and helpful' teachers. They know that their work is improving. These pupils are growing in confidence. The consultant SENCo is working with the highly qualified SENCo designate to ensure a smooth transition of responsibilities before the end of the summer term.

A new leader for the early years took up post in April 2018. This leader has worked with adults to establish consistency of practice. For example, she has ensured that the same phonics scheme is used by the on-site childcare provider as is used in school, and thereby has ensured seamless transition into the Reception Year from both settings. Teachers and teaching assistants have bought into this leader's high expectations. Staff morale is high in the early years.

Leaders have established rigorous systems to track the attainment and progress of individual pupils and groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, teachers, subject leaders and senior leaders know that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, still do not reach the standards expected for their age. They understand that pupils throughout the school are not making the progress of which they are capable.

Parents are extremely concerned about the number of different teachers that have taught their children during the current academic year. The principal has ensured that all classes will be taught by a substantive teacher in September. Astrea's CEO has confirmed that the trust's 'Supernova' teachers (employed to work across the trust) will cover teacher absences in the future. These actions are planned to ensure continuity and rapid progression for all pupils from the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year.

Safeguarding is effective. The inclusion and safeguarding manager ensures that all staff are trained appropriately and that their training is updated during weekly briefings. The school takes immediate and effective action when disclosures are made by pupils.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. The current principal, members of the TMB and officers of the trust, although ambitious for the school, acknowledge that the rate of improvement overall has not been rapid enough since the last section 5 inspection. However, they can identify areas of significant improvement due to the appointment of key staff, for example the better provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains inconsistent throughout the school. The very large number of short-term supply teachers continues to slow pupils' progress.

Inspectors, accompanied by senior leaders, observed teaching and learning in the classes of the six teachers who have contracts to teach in the school in September. In these classes, teaching assistants are deployed appropriately, teachers use their subject knowledge well, behaviour is good and pupils' work is matched well to their needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The principal and the safeguarding and inclusion manager have ensured that staff, including lunchtime supervisory staff and short-term supply teachers, understand and act in accordance with the school's behaviour management policy. Lunchtime staff and pupils have been trained as play leaders. As a result, there has been a marked reduction in the number of incidents of what the school classifies as 'violent behaviours'. In addition, fixed-term exclusions are reducing, term on term.

The school's attendance registers are now completed correctly. Pupils' attendance is rising. The number who are persistently absent is reducing. Pupils' punctuality is continuing to improve. Leaders continue to take effective action to improve pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Although the quality of provision in the early years has improved since April 2018, the proportion of pupils who are on track to reach a good level of development is lower this year than in 2017. A substantial number of children are not ready to meet the increased demands of the Year 1 curriculum. For example, many do not form their letters correctly as a matter of course.

Not enough pupils achieve the standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. However, the proportion who achieve the standard by the end of Year 2 has increased from 50% in 2017 to 84% this year. More pupils are prepared well for the demands of reading in key stage 2.

The standards that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, reach in reading, writing and mathematics remain low throughout key stages 1 and 2. The progress that pupils make from their starting points is inconsistent. For example, in Year 3, the proportion of pupils who are working at the standard expected for their age in writing has increased by 15% from their starting point at the end of Year 2. This is not the case in Years 4, 5 and 6.

External support

The local authority's moderators checked the school's assessments of Year 6 pupils' writing in June and confirmed their accuracy.

Other support for the school has come from the trust directly. Officers from the

trust audit the school's safeguarding procedures on a termly basis. 'Ad Astras' (the trust's expert teachers) have helped to develop the early years teaching and learning environment, and the teaching of writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. The large turnover in teaching staff has negated the efficacy of this support. The trust is already providing training and support for the new head of school who will take up post in September.