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Mrs Mahoney
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mahoney

Special measures monitoring inspection of Tameside Primary School

Following my visit with Paul Whitcombe, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 10–11 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in July 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.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher 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 Sandwell. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Meckin

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that teachers:
 - improve their knowledge of subjects so they can set learning targets for pupils that are linked to the age-related expectations of the curriculum
 - use information from assessments to plan tasks that meet the needs of all pupils
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve but especially the most able pupils, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - insist that pupils work to the best of their ability, including presenting their work neatly
 - improve the teaching of phonics so that pupils' reading, spelling and writing skills improve more rapidly
 - check on pupils' learning in lessons by asking them to explain their thinking, especially in mathematics
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to read, write at length and use their mathematical knowledge in other subjects
 - learn through observation of the qualities of good teaching which are evident in Year 6
 - effectively support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities including by the efficient deployment of support staff
 - help pupils to not be over-dependent on support staff
 - take steps to improve pupils' behaviour in lessons.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring that safeguarding systems are checked effectively and all records of incidents are accurately recorded
 - acting on the recommendations of the local authority and the national leader of education
 - implementing the school development plan so that leaders can gauge the impact of their actions on improving pupils' achievement and teachers' performance
 - developing a suitable leadership structure to support rapid school improvement
 - strengthening the management and oversight of SEN provision to ensure that more is expected of these pupils academically and to improve their

attendance

- improving communication between the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the school’s safeguarding team and parents
 - providing a curriculum that includes opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of British values
 - ensuring that governors hold leaders to account for following pertinent recommendations to improve the school
 - improving relationships with parents and restoring their faith in the school
 - improving the effectiveness and consistency of playground supervision to reduce the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour
 - developing the website so that it is compliant with statutory requirements.
- Improve early years provision by ensuring that teachers plan activities that develop and improve children’s skills, and making sure that adults have higher expectations of what the children can achieve to prepare them for the next stage of their education in Year 1.

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

An external evaluation of the pupil premium spending should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 10 July 2018 to 11 July 2018

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Other meetings were held with three governors, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer and other trust staff from the identified academy sponsor. Inspectors spoke to other leaders and staff and to pupils informally and formally. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects across the whole school. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Pupils' behaviour was observed at social times, in lessons and as they moved around the school site.

Various documents were scrutinised including the school's improvement plan, and records that evaluate the quality of teaching. Leaders shared the most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress with the inspectors. The lead inspector looked at the school's published information on the school's website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.

Context

Shortly after the previous monitoring inspection in March, you took up the role of acting headteacher from your substantive post as deputy headteacher. In order to manage having one less senior leader, other leaders have been given additional responsibilities. The identified academy trust has already started to support you and the school, prior to the academy conversion date of September 2018. Since the previous monitoring visit, two new teachers have started at the school, both of whom are long-term supply teachers.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You have brought clarity to the direction of the school since being appointed as acting headteacher. Your determined leadership has developed a sense of purpose among other leaders and staff. Key issues raised at the previous monitoring visit have started to be successfully addressed. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is better and teaching has improved in certain parts of the school. Inspectors spoke to some parents and carers during the inspection, and they were positive about the recent changes. Comments included, 'The school has raised its game.'

You and other leaders have worked well to evaluate and refine the school improvement plan, so that it has a sufficient focus on improving teaching. Key priorities have been addressed through staff training and through precise checks on the quality of teaching. More intensive, individualised support has proved successful and has helped several teachers to improve their practice. While the quality of

teaching has become more consistent in key stage 2, it has not progressed as strongly in key stage 1. The capacity of leadership has not been as effective in this phase of the school. Consequently, outcomes are still low at the end of Year 2.

You are well aware that further improvement is still required. One barrier to this is the leadership capacity for the autumn term 2018. Two senior leaders are leaving the school at the end of the summer term. This is likely to put a strain on the leadership team's ability to continue to drive improvement. The new academy trust is well aware of this issue and has a clear plan to provide the necessary leadership capacity.

Leaders have worked hard to improve other aspects of leadership, particular the further priorities that were identified by the previous monitoring inspection. Leadership roles are now more defined, and line management responsibilities have been clearly communicated. The local authority has supported you to ensure that performance management procedures are fit for purpose. Other leaders have carried out mid-year performance management reviews for teachers. Weaknesses in the school website have been addressed and it is now compliant with statutory guidance.

Middle leaders are energised by their increasing involvement in the improvement of the school. Leaders responsible for English, mathematics and pupil premium have a clear understanding of where improvements have been made. They also know where further development is required. Their input has helped the consistency of teaching to improve.

The procedures for planning and evaluating the pupil premium grant have been completely revised. All of the necessary documentation now meets statutory requirements. Leaders have evaluated the impact of their strategies and now know which have proved most successful. This information is being used to target the funding more precisely next year. Historically, decisions about the spending of pupil premium have lacked strategy. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' attainment remains low.

Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not receive the precise support that they need. This is an aspect of leadership that requires significant work. Assessment and identification procedures are robust, as is the involvement of external agencies. However, the quality of input for this group of pupils in lessons and through additional support is not strong enough. Staff have not received effective guidance and training.

The governing body has raised its level of support and challenge. The chair of governors has worked closely with the acting headteacher to ensure that sufficient focus has been placed on the further priorities outlined at the previous monitoring inspection. Members of the governing body know the school well and have a clear view of weaknesses that still need to be addressed. They have also ensured that key policies, such as staff absence procedures, are being enforced with greater

rigour.

Safeguarding procedures are a strength of the school. The designated safeguarding lead's record-keeping is extremely thorough and incidents are well followed up. She has worked with the acting headteacher to put in place a more strategic plan for whole-staff safeguarding training next academic year. Staff recently had their understanding checked through an audit process. Inspectors spoke to several staff during the inspection, and their understanding of safeguarding was effective. There is a positive culture for keeping pupils safe across the school.

The leadership of phonics has not been consistently strong. It received more focus at the start of the academic year. The system for assessing pupils and tracking their progress is effective. However, staff have not received enough training as the year has progressed. The reading books, which are based on an awareness of phonics, are not well organised, and staff choose pupils' books from a range of different schemes. This means that pupils sometimes read words with sounds that they have not yet been taught.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring inspection. This is particularly the case in key stage 2, where pupils tackle work that provides a more consistent level of challenge. Generally, teachers plan activities that match appropriately to age-related expectations. The vast majority of pupils focus well on their learning and, as a result, classrooms are generally calm and purposeful. Sometimes, teachers do not assess how well pupils are doing during a lesson. When this occurs, pupils are not supported when they find something difficult, or they are not challenged when they find work too easy.

The quality of mathematics teaching has improved. Recent training has had a clear impact on teachers' practice in this subject. The work in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils can use their reasoning skills with increasing success. Staff also share, and encourage pupils to use, increasingly sophisticated mathematical language during lessons.

In response to the previous monitoring visit, some aspects of English teaching have moved forward positively. Pupils enjoy reading whole-class books together. Follow-up activities enable pupils to develop different comprehensions skills. In writing, teachers have ensured that pupils write across a broader range of genres. However, pupils' handwriting, grammar and punctuation are not of a consistently high standard across the school. Pupils do not receive precise demonstrations from teachers of how to write accurately and successfully.

You rightly identify that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in foundation subjects are not well developed. You have already started working with the academy trust to design a new curriculum for the autumn term.

Outcomes by the end of key stage 1 are very low. The quality of teaching in this phase of the school has been too inconsistent. In Year 2, the teaching of writing does not have high enough expectations for pupils' handwriting, presentation and punctuation.

The teaching of phonics needs to be refined in key stage 1. Teachers plan engaging activities, which capture pupils' interest in their phonics work. However, some staff do not teach pupils to pronounce sounds or blend sounds together with sufficient precision. The pupil groupings for phonics are not organised as well as they should be. As a result, some pupils are not in an appropriate group and find the phonics work too hard or too easy.

Teaching in the early years has improved since the previous monitoring inspection. Children are settled, enjoy learning and behave well. Leaders and staff have set up a range of resources to stimulate children's curiosity outside. As a result, children enjoy being immersed in more effective physical and imaginative play. Children's progress is not yet consistent across all three classes, particularly their progress in writing. Approaches to teaching pencil grip, letter formation and handwriting are not yet precise enough.

The support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities needs to be improved. Sometimes, this group of pupils is over-reliant on adult support or the adult support does not help them to make the progress that they need to. Resources to support pupils' learning in class are not integrated effectively into lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

There has been a marked improvement in pupils' behaviour since the previous monitoring inspection. You have worked with staff and pupils to refine the behaviour policy. Pupils talked positively about the reward system and they are absolutely clear about the behaviour that is expected of them. As a result, classrooms and social times are more calm and purposeful. Comments from pupils included, 'Behaviour is much better and we can now concentrate on our work.'

However, sometimes behaviour in the afternoon is not as settled as it needs to be for some pupils. The quality of the wider curriculum impacts on pupils' engagement at this time of the day.

The welfare team has put in place thoughtful provision for pupils who have complex behavioural needs. For example, leaders analysed when incidents were occurring at social times, and additional provision has been put in place to meet these pupils' needs. This type of tailored support, coupled with the consistent use of the behaviour policy, has led to a reduction in fixed-term exclusions in the summer term.

You have tried to put in place additional leadership capacity to improve attendance, but this has proved challenging. In spite of this, you have been proactive and have

attempted to put in place new strategies. A misunderstanding with the local authority has meant that a large number of referrals have been rejected. Overall absence rates and persistent absence remain high. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. Attendance is a more positive picture for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Pupils have a growing understanding of other faiths and cultures. However, their understanding is not as well developed as it could be. This is also the case for their understanding of British values.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have risen, albeit from a low position. The provisional information relating to the end of key stage 2 test results in 2018 show that the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading has improved slightly. The same measure has improved more positively in mathematics. The proportion that achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is 10% higher than in 2017.

The work in books and your assessment information show that mathematics attainment is rising more positively than attainment in other subjects. The increase in opportunities for reasoning and problem solving has had a positive impact on pupils' mathematical understanding.

Attainment at the end of key stage 1 is not high enough, particularly in writing. The provisional teacher assessments for Year 2 show that just a third of pupils achieved the expected standard in writing. Too many pupils are not given the technical support that they need to write successfully.

The provisional results for the phonics screening check in Year 1 are lower than in 2017. Several new pupils having specific needs entered the year group late in the academic year. This impacted negatively on the overall proportion of pupils that achieved the expected standard. However, phonics outcomes are not rising quickly enough because teaching is not consistently strong.

In the early years, children's progress has been positive over the year. The quality of provision has improved and, consequently, the proportion of children who have achieved a good level of development has increased positively this academic year.

Although leaders now have a better understanding of the impact of pupil premium funding, they have not yet had time to use this understanding to improve outcomes for this group of pupils. These pupils' attainment remains low. This is also the case for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Further work needs to happen to accelerate their progress in lessons and through additional support.

External support

The local authority school improvement adviser has contributed well to the improvements made since the last monitoring visit. She has supported senior leaders to refine key statutory procedures, such as performance management, safeguarding and information on the school's website. The local authority brokered the support of an experienced headteacher for one day a week. This has helped to provide positive challenge and support for leaders.

The multi-academy trust has already started to support the school prior to the official proposed conversion date in September. The chief executive officer and other trust staff already have a clear understanding of the priorities for the school. They are well aware of issues of leadership capacity in the autumn term and have plans to address this. Trust leaders are also working closely with you to design an exciting and relevant wider curriculum for the autumn term.

Further priorities for improvement:

- Develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across the full range of national curriculum subjects.
- Ensure that leaders put an effective focus on improving the quality of phonics teaching.