

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Jeni Houghton
Hawthorn Park Community Primary
Parkside Drive
Houghton Regis
Dunstable
Bedfordshire
LU5 5QN

Dear Mrs Houghton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hawthorn Park Community Primary

Following my visit with Al Mistrano, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 18-19 September 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 January 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers 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 Central Bedfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Fielding
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use assessment effectively to plan lessons and activities that challenge pupils
 - greater levels of challenge are provided for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged
 - teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support pupils' learning
 - teachers provide feedback, in line with the school's marking policy, that helps pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - making more regular checks on the quality of pupils' work to ensure that it matches the assessment information provided by teachers
 - ensuring that subject leaders are held fully to account for their role in securing improvements
 - providing pupils with a rich and broad curriculum
 - ensuring that governors are provided with the information they need to challenge school leaders and hold them to account for securing the necessary improvements.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - raising teachers' awareness of what pupils can achieve in subjects across the curriculum
 - providing more effective support for those pupils who are disadvantaged
 - improving the provision made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - improving overall attendance by significantly reducing the number of pupils who miss school frequently
 - ensuring that all teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently.

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18 September 2018 to 19 September 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classes, including in both the Reception and Nursery classes. Inspectors were accompanied by members of the senior leadership team during all observations. Although early in the academic year, inspectors looked at pupils' work this academic year and spoke to pupils about their learning and school experiences. Inspectors also looked at behaviour across the school.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and all other members of the senior leadership team, including key stage leaders, the school business manager and the family support worker, who is also the designated safeguarding leader. Inspectors met with curriculum subject leaders, including the English and mathematics leaders. Further meetings were held with governors, including the chair of the governing body, and with the local authority representative.

Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents during this monitoring visit, including leaders' analysis of pupil outcomes and information about how the school spends the additional funding allocated to disadvantaged pupils. Inspectors also reviewed documents regarding pupils' behaviour, attendance and leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Additional documentation, such as safeguarding information and policies, the school's action plan and governor paperwork, were also scrutinised.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in April 2018, there have been several staff changes. An additional assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), started in May 2018. In July 2018, the other assistant headteacher left the school.

Four new teachers joined the school in September 2018. Three of the new teachers took up leadership roles in September 2018. One of these posts is a newly created curriculum leader role to strategically oversee curriculum development.

In September 2018, the school changed from having two classes in each year group in Reception and Year 1 to having one Reception class, one Year 1 class and one mixed Reception/Year 1 class.

Two new members have joined the governing body since the first monitoring visit.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and governors have not maintained a sense of urgency or pace in how they raise standards. They have not been rigorous, precise and swift in their work to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Subsequently, pupils' outcomes are not getting better quickly enough. While there are pockets of effective teaching practice across the school, including from new teachers, these are minimal and the current provision overall remains weak.

Leaders are not demonstrating sufficient capacity to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders' effectiveness has been partially hampered by a challenge to recruit new teachers. Even so, the actions that they have taken to raise standards have been ineffective. For example, the weekly monitoring of teaching and learning work lacks rigour and precision about what issues exist. Therefore, teachers are not adequately held to account to ensure that all pupils in their classes make good progress and do not know how to successfully achieve this. This is resulting in low expectations and weak practice across the school.

The leadership team, including the teachers with responsibilities for subjects or for specific aspects of the school's work, are all at different levels of skill, experience and expertise. Several of the established leaders are not wholly effective in holding staff to account for their performance. These leaders have not received individualised support to undertake this aspect of their work well. Other leaders are new to post, having started their roles in September 2018. Their work is still in its infancy and so they have not had time to demonstrate their effectiveness. The influence and effect of all leaders' actions will be a focus for the next monitoring visit.

Leaders have taken little action to improve their use of the additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils. Despite the pupil premium review taking place just before the first monitoring visit, leaders cannot yet show they have effectively managed the funding so it makes a difference to disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and governors are not monitoring the use of this funding with any rigour.

Governors are not holding school leaders to account precisely enough over important aspects of the school's work, for example the progress of pupils, the spending of additional funding, the impact of the work that is being undertaken or the compliance of the school's website. Although governors work hard, visit the school regularly in various capacities and are passionate about the school improving, they are not sufficiently rigorous and strategic in their work to present meaningful challenge to leaders that makes a difference to pupils' provision in the school.

The school's website does not meet statutory requirements. For example, leaders have not published an up-to-date pupil premium strategy and have not reported the impact of the pupil premium funding on the outcomes of pupils in the previous year.

Additionally, the current safeguarding policy on the website does not reflect the latest statutory guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Despite understanding the urgency required, leaders have still not taken rigorous enough action to successfully and rapidly move teaching, learning and assessment forward.

Where underperformance in teaching has been identified, some leaders have provided focused support working with teachers. However, leaders are not providing teachers with the exact guidance needed to help pupils make faster progress. For instance, when checking and reviewing teaching, they do not focus enough on what teachers need to do to improve their practice. This is contributing towards a further decline in standards.

Teachers' expectations are still too low. Across the school, with only a few exceptions, the work that pupils are accessing is not consistently appropriate or challenging enough to meet their needs, including for the most able pupils. There remains among some teachers an over-reliance on leaders and consequently a reduction in the 'can do' attitude and mindset of some adults. Despite their efforts, leaders have not yet been able to ensure that all teachers understand their responsibility to make sure that all pupils achieve the best they can.

Provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has not improved since the previous monitoring visit. This is because the quality of teaching is not good enough. Additionally, staff are not being held rigorously to account for the work they do with these pupils and leadership monitoring is not precise enough to identify and rectify weaknesses quickly. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are not making the progress they should from their starting points.

Inspection evidence shows that provision in Reception has deteriorated since the standards seen in the previous inspection. Initial observations show that children are not being given appropriately considered tasks so they have the opportunity to explore, investigate and develop their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence demonstrates that expectations of Reception children are not high enough. There is currently a clear disparity between the quality of what is happening in Reception and what is happening in Nursery, where the quality of provision is stronger.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The improvement in behaviour is Hawthorn Park's success story. Pupils are polite, enthusiastic and want to do well. This is a result of the deputy headteacher leading focused work on improving behaviour across the school.

Over time, leaders have carried out much work developing a new behaviour policy and approach to managing behaviour. This is ensuring that pupils are ready to learn and there is very little disruption to learning. Staff are using the behaviour policy with greater consistency and this is ensuring that challenging behaviour is being managed more effectively.

Pupils and parents told inspectors that behaviour in lessons and around the school has improved. Inspection evidence confirms this to be the case. Occasionally, a few pupils become distracted or disinterested. Evidence shows that this tends to happen when their work does not fully engage them. In the playground pupils are respectful and considerate of one another. They enjoy each other's company and work and play well together.

The school is continuing to work closely with parents and pupils to improve attendance. The deputy headteacher and attendance manager routinely monitor attendance. There are rigorous processes in place to support families and work with parents to ensure that they understand the importance of their child attending school regularly. As evidenced during the previous monitoring visit, as a result of the close monitoring and leaders' actions, attendance is improving and the levels of persistent absence are decreasing.

Outcomes for pupils

Leaders remain acutely aware that pupils are not achieving well enough. The progress that pupils make from their starting points is not good enough, including for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Teachers' assessments are too often not accurate, and this continues to have an impact on leaders being able to report upon, analyse and evaluate how well pupils are achieving, and subsequently improving the outcomes for pupils. Equally, ongoing assessment is still not being used consistently well to plan learning to meet pupils' needs.

Leaders have effectively utilised support from the local authority to check the end-of-year attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 as well as other assessment information that leaders had concerns about. However, leaders' general use and understanding of the data that they produce is not sufficiently secure. Leaders themselves are not convinced that their assessment information is fully accurate. This is severely hampering their ability to support individuals and groups of pupils effectively, such as disadvantaged pupils.

Leaders and governors are particularly disappointed with the poorer outcomes across the school in 2017/18. Despite some improvements in phonics and pupils achieving greater depth at key stage 1, the bigger picture of achievement remains too low. The proportion of Reception children achieving a good level of development in 2018 declined from the previous year. The proportion of key stage 1 pupils

achieving the expected standard in reading and writing and combined reading, writing and mathematics has also declined. The 2018 provisional outcomes for key stage 2 show a similar picture of decline for pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading and mathematics. There was also a regression in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Consequently, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who achieve the expected combined standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2018 was too low.

External support

School leaders are continuing to engage with the full range of available external support. The headteacher has been proactive in approaching the local authority for additional support when required and these requests have always been considered and fulfilled.

The local authority support has been extensive. It has consisted of support from a national leader of education and two specialist leaders of education, one in English and another in mathematics. The school improvement partner visits, staff training courses and the support of a national leader of governance on the governing body have continued. The local authority link adviser chairs the governing body monitoring group. Despite this wide-ranging support, although there have been some improvements, these have either not been sustained or have not had the necessary impact to improve swiftly the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards at Hawthorn Park.

Priorities for further improvement:

Leaders and those responsible for governance should continue to focus on the areas for improvement identified in the previous monitoring inspection and in addition, ensure that:

- the provision in early years is rigorously monitored to ensure that the good practice identified in the previous inspection is maintained.