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Mr Luke Talmage
Manor Court Community Primary School
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Dear Mr Talmage

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Manor Court Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 October 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve senior and phase leaders' monitoring checks to ensure that their actions enable pupils to make consistently good progress
- ensure that pupils' spelling is improved across the school
- ensure that the trust holds senior leaders to account, ensuring that the school's self-evaluation is accurate.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. I also met with the chief executive officer (CEO) of Preston Primary Academy Trust (PPAT). I met with a group of governors and the newly appointed phase leaders. I held a meeting with the designated safeguarding lead, who is also

the deputy headteacher and special needs coordinator. The school's action plan and a range of other documents were scrutinised, including attendance information, minutes of meetings and current pupils' performance information.

I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at social times, and conducted visits to classrooms to observe pupils' progress and their attitudes to learning. Pupils' work across a range of subjects and year groups was scrutinised. I checked the school's single central record of checks on staff recruitment. I reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation alongside the designated safeguarding lead, the CEO of the trust and the headteacher.

Context

The school converted to become a member of PPAT in September 2018. Prior to this, the school was part of Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT), which is now disbanded. There is a newly formed governing body, led by a new chair of governors, who took up his role in September 2018 when the interim executive board arrangements came to an end. There are two newly qualified teachers. Six teachers have left the school since the last inspection. The school's leadership structure changed in September 2018 to include phase leaders across the school. There have been no changes to senior leadership in the school since the school's previous inspection.

Main findings

The headteacher and his team of leaders are taking determined action to bring about whole-school improvement. Leaders are working on the right aspects. The school's action plans are fit for purpose and provide timely milestones. Leaders' actions are proving increasingly successful in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes across the school.

In 2018, the proportion of pupils who left key stage 1 with the skills and knowledge expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics increased steeply because of the better teaching pupils received. The proportion of pupils who met the requirements of the phonics screening check in Year 1 also improved markedly to be above the national average. However, pupils' application of phonics and spelling is still too inconsistent.

In key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who left the school with skills and knowledge in line with their age showed strong improvement in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in writing and reading. However, some pupils did not make consistently good progress across key stage 2. Current pupils are making better progress this year. However, teaching is not yet fully making amends for pupils' prior underachievement caused by previously weak teaching.

Current pupils' outcomes in English are improving steadily. Pupils' spelling across

the school remains a relative weakness. This prevents many pupils writing with the accuracy expected for, or in advance of, their age. Inaccurate application of phonics and spelling rules is not routinely tackled in some classes. This slows some pupils' progress in writing.

Leaders' vigorous actions to improve pupils' attendance are proving successful. As a result, pupils' attendance was in line with the national average at the end of last year. Persistent absenteeism is reducing. Pupils' attendance this year has improved markedly. Overall attendance is well above the national average. Those pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also attend well.

Effective professional development is enabling teachers' subject knowledge to improve. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment continue to diminish steadily. Leaders' actions to ensure that teachers moderate pupils' work across the school and with other schools in the trust are proving effective in improving the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Precisely planned training and support for teachers who are new or relatively new to the profession are having a positive impact.

Leaders have ensured that more precise whole-school systems are in place to target specific groups of pupils who need to catch up. Leaders have regular conversations about pupils' progress and identify pupils needing intervention. Leaders' use of pupil premium funding is increasingly effective. The difference between disadvantaged pupils' progress and that of others is diminishing steadily. However, leaders accurately identify that there is more to do to ensure that this group of pupils make the progress they are capable of.

Leaders have set up systems to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. However, these checks are too often about compliance and do not yet focus on checking pupils' progress from their starting points precisely enough. They do not provide teachers with the explicit feedback they need to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs so that they catch up rapidly. Leaders do not yet use the information they have to hold staff to account for adapting their teaching. As a result, in a few classes, some pupils do not yet receive the right work to catch up quickly enough.

Where teaching is most strong, pupils who have previously fallen behind are catching up. However, where teaching remains inconsistent, pupils, including those who have low prior attainment, do not yet receive work that is precisely matched to their needs. Teachers do not use their assessments precisely to adapt the teaching on offer. As a result, some pupils' learning slows or pupils can become overly compliant or passive.

Leaders' actions to improve the school's wider curriculum offer are paying off. Pupils experience a richer curriculum than previously, and this ensures that pupils' depth

of knowledge in humanities is improving well. The school's approach for enriching the curriculum through the 'Manor Court 48' opportunities is helping pupils to use and apply their skills across the curriculum and take part in a wide range of activities within the community so as to expand their experiences.

The newly formed governing body is putting systems and procedures in place to hold the school to account. However, their actions are too new for their impact to be determined.

Internal support has enabled improvements to teachers' assessments and teaching through visits to other schools in PPAT over the last few months. However, the trust's school-improvement work is only just beginning to result in leaders being held to account for further improving pupils' outcomes. Both the trust leader and the headteacher acknowledge that more time is needed so that recent improvements can be sustained.

External support

The interim executive board has, over the last few months, successfully rebrokered the school from CAT to PPAT and provided stability to governance. An external whole-school review took place last year with Babcock improvement service. The headteacher has been proactive in facilitating his staff to work with other schools to moderate teachers' assessments and support teachers' skills development. Additional funding has been provided through a regional project to develop early reading and phonics.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Carrington
Her Majesty's Inspector