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Mrs Allyson Buckton
Stillington Primary School
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York
North Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Buckton

Special measures monitoring inspection of Stillington Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 October 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 November 2016.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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 North Yorkshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dimitris Spiliotis

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Strengthen leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that assessment of pupils' achievement is accurately documented so that all teachers, leaders, parents and governors have a clear understanding of pupils' progress and attainment in all subjects; and so that underachievement is promptly identified and teachers can use the information to meet pupils' needs closely
 - ensuring that leaders regularly and rigorously check the quality of teaching, and its impact on different groups of learners, so that where there are issues, training can be provided to facilitate rapid improvements
 - developing the curriculum so that there are regular opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as speaking skills
 - developing opportunities within the curriculum for pupils to learn about different types of families and relationships
 - evaluating accurately the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and the effectiveness of different areas of provision in the school, especially in the early years and key stage 1, so that everyone knows where the school is improving and where further improvement is needed.
- Urgently improve the quality of teaching in the early years and key stage 1, by:
 - making regular checks on what pupils can and cannot do, so that learning tasks meet their needs closely and they are challenged to push themselves and reach higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should be able to do and giving them regular opportunities to practise and reinforce the key skills of reading, writing, mathematics and speaking.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 17 October 2018

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised school documents, including assessment information, safeguarding records, behaviour and attendance information and information around the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. I met with the executive headteacher, the acting head of school and the teacher of early years and key stage 1. I held discussions with governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also met with a representative from the local authority.

I spoke with parents and a range of pupils and listened to pupils read. I observed teaching in both the classes in school, jointly with the executive headteacher and together we scrutinised work in pupils' books. I also talked informally with pupils during breaks and lunchtimes.

Context

Since the last inspection in November 2016, there have been significant changes to staffing. Early in 2017, the teacher of key stage 1 and early years left the school and leaders experienced difficulties in recruiting a suitable replacement. A new teacher for early years was eventually appointed in the summer of 2017 and the previous headteacher, along with the chair of the governing body, left the school in December 2017.

The local authority secured the appointment of a temporary executive headteacher in January 2018 and an interim chair of governors. The key stage 2 teacher is acting head of school, supported by the experienced executive headteacher for part of the week. A new chair was appointed in July 2018. The school is currently going through the process to become an academy.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since her appointment in January 2018, the executive headteacher has conducted a full review of the school's performance and has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's interim improvement plan focuses on the main priorities for improvement. The executive headteacher has recently taken swift actions to improve the school. However, since the previous inspection the pace of change has not been rapid enough. As a result, and although some improvements have been made in early years and key stage 1, many of the areas of weakness identified at the previous inspection remain priorities for the school.

Following the last inspection, a review of governance took place in July 2017. However, many of the recommendations have not been implemented quickly enough. Changes to the governing body and difficulties in recruiting suitable

governors have meant that since the last inspection, the work of the governing body has not been effective in holding leaders to account and driving whole-school improvement. Governors do not monitor the school's use of additional funding, including the pupil premium and sport funding, well enough.

Changes to the governing body, including the appointment of an experienced governor from a neighbouring school, have strengthened governance. The executive headteacher recently ensured that governors receive clear information in order to evaluate more accurately the impact of leaders' actions on school improvement. As a result, there are positive signs of increased challenge and support to leaders, but it is too early to see any significant impact.

The curriculum for early years and key stage 1 has been reviewed and implemented in September 2018. A more creative, topic-led curriculum provides increased opportunities for pupils to improve their skills in writing, mathematics and reading. However, it is too early to see any significant impact. The curriculum for both key stages has been strengthened to develop opportunities for pupils to learn about different types of families and relationships. Developments in the classroom environments, inspection evidence and discussions with pupils confirm improvements in this area.

Since January 2018, the executive headteacher has reviewed the school's assessment procedures and worked closely with other schools and the local authority to ensure that the accuracy of teacher assessment is improving. As a result, assessment of pupils' work in early years and key stage 1 is more effective. Regular assessments and scrutiny of pupils' work identify underachievement and plans are put in place to provide additional support to pupils who need it. Consequently, there are signs of improvement in the outcomes of pupils in early years and key stage 1, including the achievement of pupils in the phonics screening checks. However, the impact of these actions has not been as effective in improving outcomes in key stage 2.

The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has improved since January 2018. A carefully planned programme of visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work identify areas for further improvement. Close collaboration with another primary school and the local authority has resulted in targeted professional development and support for teachers in the school. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning in early years and key stage 1 is improving.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been too variable over time. Strategies to help pupils catch up have had a limited impact. As a result, most pupils do not make good enough progress from their starting points.

The executive headteacher has correctly prioritised teaching and learning and introduced clear, increased expectations about the quality of teaching and learning. There is a carefully planned programme of monitoring, through visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. Areas for improvement are clearly identified, shared with individual staff and followed up. Plans for teaching literacy at key stage 1 have been reviewed and incorporate spelling, grammar and punctuation. The classroom environments have been strengthened to promote and further support learning. As a result, the teaching of writing and mathematics in key stage 1 is improving.

The local authority and staff from a partner school have worked closely with teachers to improve their practice. In early years and key stage 1, the planning of learning activities provides appropriate challenge for most pupils and ensures that most pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are engaged in their learning. There are high expectations of all pupils. However, there is variation in the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation of work. Staff use questioning increasingly well to identify any gaps in knowledge and understanding. As a result, the quality of teaching in early years and key stage 1 is improving, including the teaching of phonics. Visits to lessons, inspection evidence and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm this. However, the planning of outdoor activities for early years children does not ensure that all pupils are engaged in meaningful and purposeful learning.

Teaching at key stage 2 is less effective and, as a result, most pupils do not make good enough progress from their starting points. Although pupils work well independently, they have very few opportunities to work collaboratively. The planning of learning, including in writing and mathematics, does not provide appropriate stretch and challenge for most of the most able pupils. Expectations are inconsistent. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates variation in the quantity and quality of work produced by pupils in this class. However, pupils' work is well presented, and pupils take pride in their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. The curriculum has been reviewed and the teaching of personal, social and emotional education has been strengthened. As a result, pupils can articulate what they learn about different types of families and relationships.

Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and are polite to each other and staff. Bullying rarely happens, but when it does, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively. Inspection evidence and views of parents, carers, pupils and staff confirm this.

Pupils feel safe and are happy coming to school. Leaders monitor attendance effectively. As a result, the attendance of pupils is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Since the executive headteacher was appointed in January 2018, there are signs of improvement in the outcomes of pupils in early years and at the end of key stage 1. However, since the last inspection, the progress of pupils has not been good enough and has not improved rapidly enough for most pupils, including the most able pupils.

Leaders have worked closely with the local authority, a local school and a local teaching school alliance to check that teacher assessment is accurate. The executive headteacher has also reviewed the way that staff use the school's system to monitor pupils' progress. Consequently, leaders and staff are more confident that assessment is accurate and gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified in a timely manner.

The teaching of phonics is improving. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards at the phonics screening checks is improving. Inspection evidence confirms this.

The progress of pupils currently in the school in the early years and key stage 1 class is improving. However, the progress of current pupils in the key stage 2 class from their starting points is not good enough, especially for the most able pupils. Improvement in progress for these pupils has not been rapid enough since the last inspection, including in reading and writing. Inspection evidence, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm this.

External support

The school receives support from the local authority and the Hope Learning Trust. The temporary head of school receives support from the experienced executive headteacher for part of the week. One teacher has observed effective teaching and learning in other schools, which is helping her to focus on how she can improve her own practice. These visits have inspired her and given her confidence to improve further.

The local authority has provided extensive support since the last inspection, including for governance. However, despite recent improvements, staffing changes and difficulties in recruitment have meant that the support to date has not brought about rapid improvement since the previous inspection.

- Leaders should urgently ensure that teaching and learning at key stage 2 meets the needs of all pupils, including the most able, and improvements are taking place at an accelerated pace, across all subjects, including in writing and mathematics.