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4 December 2018

Miss Karen Godwin
Newtown Primary School
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Dear Miss Godwin

Special measures monitoring inspection of Newtown Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 21 to 22 November 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 2017.

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 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 Sandwell. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cameron
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- As a matter of urgency, leaders and governors must:
 - focus on securing high-quality, permanent members of staff who will provide good teaching and bring continuity for pupils' learning
 - secure accurate assessment information, so that the progress and attainment of groups can be analysed reliably
 - use assessment information to put in place high-quality support for pupils who need to catch up
 - ensure that additional funding for pupil premium is well planned and has measurable success criteria linked to the improvement in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - check the quality of teaching thoroughly and give precise next steps of support, so that teachers can make the necessary improvements
 - arrange high-quality training for staff that focuses on the most important priorities for improvement
 - provide a curriculum that enables pupils to acquire skills, knowledge and experiences across the full range of statutory subjects
 - ensure that the governing body has the capacity to provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders, particularly in relation to outcomes for pupils
 - develop more enrichment activities for pupils, such as extra-curricular clubs and trips linked to the curriculum
 - make sure that the physical education (PE) and sport premium grant is used to increase participation in clubs and in competitive sport
 - make sure that the school's website is fully compliant.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and outcomes in reading by ensuring that:
 - pupils read widely and often with books that spark their imagination
 - teachers develop pupils' reading comprehension skills effectively
 - the culture of reading is raised in class environments and around school, so that pupils see the importance of it
 - leaders and teachers work with parents, so that they can support their child to read at home more frequently
 - pupils for whom English is not a first language receive precise support to

develop their reading skills.

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that teachers are supported to:
 - assess accurately and match work appropriately to pupils’ needs, so that they are challenged and make good progress
 - use effective subject knowledge to demonstrate to pupils how to produce high-quality work
 - respond during lessons to provide support to pupils finding work difficult or to challenge those finding it easy
 - improve pupils’ grammar, punctuation and spelling, so that they can apply these skills in longer pieces of writing
 - plan meaningful opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills through reasoning.
- Improve the early years foundation stage provision by using assessment information to target provision more closely to the needs of boys and disadvantaged children.

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

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 21 November 2018 to 22 November 2018

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the leaders for curriculum, reading, writing and mathematics, the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. In addition, the inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and spoke to pupils informally during the inspection.

The inspector observed teaching and looked at pupils' books with senior leaders. A range of documents were considered, including the school's improvement plans, the local authority's statement of action, notes of visits from external partners, the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium and the external review of governance, records of the checks on the quality of teaching, and the school's current information about pupils' progress and attainment. The single central record of checks made on staff was also reviewed.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in November 2017, there have been several staff changes, including at leadership level. A part-time, interim deputy headteacher joined the school in May 2018. Two new teachers joined the school in September 2018. Two teachers are long-term supply agency staff. Another teacher's position is covered by a short-term supply teacher. One teacher, on maternity leave, is covered by a teacher on a fixed-term contract. Currently, in key stage 2, three out of four classes are taught by temporary staff.

The chair of governors and the vice-chair of governors have recently resigned. The new chair of governors, a national leader of governance, was appointed by the local authority prior to the last inspection to support the governing body.

The school is currently in the process of an academy conversion.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last inspection, leaders have sought to address the instability in staffing. Although they have not appointed permanent teachers to all posts, leaders have made specific appointments to provide continuity for pupils' learning and to strengthen capacity in the school. For example, governors ensured that there was a seamless transition in early years by supporting the early appointment of a supply teacher. Other long-term supply staff and a new permanent teacher were appointed with the skills and expertise to lead specific areas of responsibility. Current pupils in Year 6 have had greater stability than in the recent past, and as a result, are achieving stronger outcomes than previous cohorts. The deputy headteacher has

provided some stability since May 2018, although currently this is a part-time, interim post.

Now that staffing is more stable, leaders have made more improvements in recent months. Some changes, however, are very new and are yet to show significant impact, such as the introduction of a new curriculum and the development of mathematics.

At the last inspection, leaders and staff did not make effective use of their assessment system because they did not understand it fully. They have since received further training so that they can make better use of the information it provides. Staff now have a better understanding of the assessment criteria and leaders check that work in pupils' books matches teachers' assessments. Staff have found the moderation of pupils' work with other schools and the local authority especially helpful. The assessment system is now used more effectively to make more accurate judgements and to identify gaps in pupils' learning. This is helping teachers in their planning, and ensuring that leaders can deploy staff to support pupils who need to catch up.

Leaders have now established an improved monitoring cycle, so that they now check on the quality of teaching and learning together with the progress and attainment of pupils more frequently. Teachers receive some helpful feedback and areas for development, which leaders revisit within a specified timescale to ensure that the quality of teaching improves.

After consulting with staff, parents and carers, pupils and governors, a new curriculum was introduced in September 2018. The curriculum is now organised so that pupils are provided with memorable experiences and greater challenge. Teachers identify opportunities to teach pupils about British values and ways to support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The curriculum promotes learning together with parents. Pupils complete 'take-away tasks' at home with parents who are invited into school to see displays of pupils' work. The curriculum is now enriched by much wider opportunities, such as visits to the theatre, the seaside and castles. The range of experiences is having a positive impact on pupils' writing. Although this new curriculum is still at an early stage, and is not embedded fully, pupils are more excited about their learning and are better engaged.

Following the last inspection, more after-school sports clubs were provided for pupils, but these were poorly attended. As an alternative, sports coaches delivered structured physical activities for pupils at lunchtime. Pupils are more physically active, but there is no increased participation in clubs and competitive sport. The leader responsible for the physical education (PE) and sport premium has useful plans in place to address this in the spring term.

Governors have ensured that they have provided appropriate financial support to

make improvements in the school such as for staffing, training and resources. The new committee structure allows governors to have a clearer focus on particular areas such as pupils' outcomes and school improvement. Governors carry out learning walks and book trawls with leaders and advisers, so that they can see the impact of leaders' work for themselves. They are now better informed. Governors demonstrate a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, especially those to do with the progress and attainment of pupils and the quality of teaching in the school. The governing body is small because of recent resignations and, although the chair of governors is a national leader of governance, other governors are relatively inexperienced. The chair of governors has provided training for governors so that they are learning how to hold leaders to account through effective questioning, monitoring and evaluation. Governors have checked that the school's website now provides the information that it should.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium was completed in January 2018. The review's recommendations have resulted in revisions to the pupil premium strategy, so that the analysis of interventions is now much more focused. The review of governance completed in June 2018 made recommendations, such as that governors should establish a 'calendar of governance' and records of impact. Governors now ensure that they complete records of their planned monitoring visits to the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The commitment of staff is strong. They now have a clearer direction and are working together to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

Leaders have raised the profile of reading considerably and have introduced a new whole-school approach to reading to ensure that teachers develop pupils' comprehension skills more effectively. Pupils now have a greater love of reading and are reading a range of texts, such as 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas', 'Letters from the Lighthouse' and 'The Jungle Book'. They are encouraged to read more through the school's reading reward scheme, 'Make reading your sport', and earn bronze, silver and gold badges. Attractive displays promote reading and celebrate pupils' achievements. Each month, pupils focus on a particular author and enjoyed having an author visit their school. Parents are provided with resources such as a bank of helpful questions to support their children with reading at home.

The teaching of reading follows a clear learning sequence to build and develop skills in reading more securely. Evidence in books shows that comprehension skills are being taught explicitly and pupils' reading comprehension skills are improving. For example, pupils can now identify the type of questions they are being asked and have improved strategies to answer them.

Pupils are developing a wider vocabulary that is also helping them in their writing. Teachers explore the meanings of words in different contexts, so that pupils use

them appropriately and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Inspection evidence shows that the quality of writing is improving. There are now greater opportunities for extended writing and these are planned for across the curriculum. Teachers focus on identifying features of a text and aspects of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils are encouraged to edit their work and improve and apply their skills. Teachers provide helpful feedback, but on occasion, pupils do not use this feedback to move forward in their learning. Spelling remains a weakness.

In mathematics, pupils now have more opportunities for reasoning and problem solving. However, the most able pupils do not receive sufficient challenge. Some pupils do not use their mathematical knowledge effectively in explaining their understanding. On occasion, teachers do not ensure that pupils have appropriate resources to help them in their learning.

In early years, staff now make better use of assessment information to identify children's needs and adapt planning and provision, especially for boys and disadvantaged children. On entry, children's communication and language are weak, especially those of boys. Changes to the learning environment have had a positive impact on children's language development through greater opportunities for investigation, problem solving and role play. Children are confident and keen to talk to adults. For example, boys in the role-play area dressed as police officers talked happily about what they were doing. One said, 'We are policeman. We have to check no one goes on the roof. We have to phone the fireman.'

The early years leader has worked effectively with external partners to improve provision and outcomes in early years. As a result, the early years environment is vibrant and engages children well in purposeful learning. Staff have developed several areas indoors, such as an investigation area, a technology area and a 'bear cave' for storytelling. Outdoors, leaders have enhanced the outdoor environment with private spaces and dens, a mud kitchen, and a bug area, as well as space for physical activities and large construction, and areas to support reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils behave well because teachers have high expectations for behaviour. Pupils are polite, respectful and courteous. Pupils and staff have strong relationships and consequently pupils respond well to them.

Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning because they are interested and engaged in their learning. They work hard and try to do their best. Year 6 pupils, for instance, worked together well in groups to perform the poem 'In Flanders Field' about the First World War with thoughtfulness and feeling. Other pupils listened attentively and gave helpful feedback to their peers. Most pupils take a pride in their work, so that books are neat and well presented, especially in key stage 1. On occasion, in some classes in key stage 2, the

presentation of pupils' work is not as strong because teachers' expectations are not as high.

Pupils make a strong contribution to school life and are proud to take on roles such as those of reading ambassadors in the school library. School leaders welcome their ideas and opinions. For example, pupils designed book corners in their classrooms. The school council agreed the success criteria and voted for the best one. Pupils designed pictorial 'reading monsters' to identify specific reading skills and leaders carried out pupil conferencing to find out what would encourage pupils to read more.

Outcomes for pupils

In early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen further and is now in line with the national average. A greater proportion of disadvantaged children achieved a good level of development compared with non-disadvantaged children. Although the progress of boys has improved, their attainment remains below the national average.

Pupils' outcomes in the national phonics screening check improved further in 2018 and they are now above the national average. Attainment at the end of key stage 1 also improved, so that pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are now broadly in line with the national average.

This is not the case in key stage 2. Provisional outcomes in 2018 show that there has been little improvement in progress and attainment, and in some subjects, there has been a further decline. Pupils' outcomes in key stage 2 have been affected by weak teaching and disrupted learning. This is now being addressed. While current pupils' attainment is not where it should be, pupils' books and the school's own assessment information show that pupils' progress and attainment are showing signs of improvement, especially in Years 5 and 6.

External support

The school has benefited from support from the local authority and from working with other schools. The local authority moderation of teachers' assessments of pupils' work in Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 confirmed accurate assessments. The local authority task group meets half termly to keep a close eye on the progress of the school against the local authority's statement of action. Expectations have risen and leaders and staff understand the urgency required to improve.