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Mrs Heap
Interim Headteacher
Rounds Green Primary School
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Dear Mrs Heap

Special measures monitoring inspection of Rounds Green Primary School

Following my visit with Kevin Butlin and Michael Appleby, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 11 and 12 December 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 2016. 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 should take further action to:

- ensure that there is sufficient senior leadership capacity in place to continue to drive improvement.

The previous monitoring inspections indicated that the school is allowed to appoint a total of three newly qualified teachers. No more than three may be appointed.

Yours sincerely

Matt Meekin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are effective by:
 - adhering closely to the school's safeguarding policy
 - assessing risks regularly and taking immediate action on potential or identified shortcomings
 - teaching pupils to keep safe from risks such as child exploitation and radicalisation.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that middle leaders effectively lead on their subjects or areas so that pupils achieve appropriately for their age
 - monitoring pupils' progress, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and taking action so that no pupil falls behind
 - ensuring that governors discharge their core statutory functions effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - securing the accuracy of teachers' assessments to gain a precise view of pupils' progress
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons well, meet the needs of different pupils and check their understanding
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply, develop and refine their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare, including pupils' attendance, by:
 - ensuring that pupils attend school regularly and arrive on time at the start of the school day
 - eradicating low-level disruption in lessons, so that pupils are not distracted and their learning is not interrupted
 - dealing with bullying concerns effectively and in a timely manner.
- Improve the provision in early years by:
 - ensuring that leaders have high expectations of what children should know and do so that children systematically develop the skills they need in preparation for their next stage of education
 - assessing all risks and taking the necessary action to ensure that children learn safely

- planning complementary activities so that children do not interrupt others who need to listen carefully or work quietly
- ensuring that resources effectively support children’s learning and inspire their interest, for example by choosing appropriate books for reading sessions
- ensuring that parents contribute to staff’s knowledge about what children know and can do and keeping parents informed so that they know how to support their children at home.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 December 2018

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the chair of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to a range of other leaders and staff, as well as speaking to pupils informally and formally. Inspectors also 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 written self-evaluation, the improvement plan and records of senior leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching. Inspectors scrutinised the school's most recent assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. They also looked at the school's published information on the website, as well as minutes of governing body meetings and information about attendance, behaviour and safety.

Context

The role of headteacher continues to be on an interim basis. The interim headteacher has just received notification that the contract will be extended for the spring term 2019. An interim deputy headteacher and a new assistant headteacher have added additional leadership capacity to the school during this autumn term. The interim deputy headteacher's secondment finishes at the end of this term and there are no plans in place to replace this post. The interim headteacher and another member of staff are providing temporary cover for the leadership of special educational needs. Two newly qualified teachers started in the school during the autumn term. There are currently two supply teachers in school to cover staff absence. A new governor with educational experience has been appointed to the governing body.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Despite uncertainty in the future leadership of the school, the interim headteacher continues to lead with integrity and determination. She has skilfully managed a complex and unavoidable deficit budget. The challenges faced have not stopped the leadership team from making further improvements to the quality of teaching. Staff, pupils and parents recognise the positive changes that are taking place. Staff, including newly qualified teachers, feel well supported by the senior leadership team.

During this autumn term, additional senior leadership support has helped to provide effective capacity. However, the local authority and governing body has not considered leadership capacity for the spring term. As it stands, the interim

headteacher will be the only non-class-based leader. This does not provide the level of support required to sustain the pace of improvement. The two assistant headteachers have full-time class teacher responsibility and the outgoing interim deputy headteacher has not been replaced. A lack of forward planning makes leadership fragile moving forwards.

Leaders have responded well to the additional priorities that were set at the previous monitoring inspection. The priorities in the school improvement plan are relevant and focused. Each priority has clear success criteria so that leaders and governors can check if actions have been successful. For example, leaders have already been able to demonstrate that actions taken in reading this term are proving successful. A new summary self-evaluation document, which has concise and accurate evaluations of the school's strengths and areas for development, has been developed.

The development of the wider curriculum has received greater emphasis since the previous inspection. A clear curriculum map is in place, with a progression of the knowledge and skills expected to be taught for each subject. Evidence in pupils' books demonstrates that pupils' understanding is starting to develop more effectively. They are also getting more opportunities to write and use their mathematical skills across the curriculum. Trips and visitors enhance pupils' curriculum experiences. Pupils expressed their enjoyment of their trip to the Black Country Museum and their visit from a Roman soldier. Some subjects, for example computing and languages, are not receiving the coverage that they should.

Leaders check the quality of teaching systematically and effectively. Various leaders are involved in this process and feedback to staff is precise. Since the previous inspection, these processes have been sharpened further by making sure that previous action points given to teachers are revisited. These checks support teachers to improve their practice.

Leaders have worked successfully to improve the reliability of assessment information. Teachers make accurate assessments by evaluating pupils' performance in tests and the work in their books. This information is used to track pupils' attainment and identify weaknesses in specific subjects or year groups.

The arrangements and culture for safeguarding continue to be a strength of the school. Changes to statutory safeguarding guidance have been put into policy swiftly. Effective training has enabled staff to have a good understanding of the changes. Designated safeguarding leads take safety incredibly seriously. Record-keeping is meticulous, and concerns are followed up tenaciously.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Thoughtful curriculum work contributes well to the safe culture in the school. Older pupils in the school understand risks associated with radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. They talked of a lesson where they learned about a 45-year-old man who lied about

his age and tried to befriend a child online. Pupils are clear about how to stay alert of such dangers and how to involve a trusted adult if they are concerned about something.

Parents who talked to inspectors during the inspection were impressed with the direction the school is taking. Remarks were made in relation to the quality of support in the classroom, as well as additional support in place for speech and language and behaviour. Typical comments from parents included, 'the decline has stopped and things have improved' and 'It is a really friendly school; staff and pupils get on well together.'

The governing body has not put sufficient focus on planning and securing leadership capacity for the spring term. However, all other aspects of governance are strong. Meetings and governors' visits into school demonstrate that they provide an effective blend of challenge and support. Members of the governing body have a broad range of skills and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The chair of the governing body provides effective training and support to ensure that statutory safeguarding responsibilities are successfully fulfilled.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous monitoring inspection. Pockets of very weak teaching that were still evident in the school have been successfully tackled. Staff are implementing the agreed whole-school strategies with increasing consistency.

Positive relationships between staff and pupils help most lessons to progress with a sense of purpose. Work is being matched more effectively to pupils' prior learning. Teachers' improved understanding of national curriculum content in different subjects has enabled them to challenge pupils more consistently.

The use of temporary teaching staff is gradually reducing. However, there are still a few classrooms with supply staff to cover unforeseen absence. Recruitment of teachers is an ongoing challenge. There have been very few applicants for advertised positions. This has had an impact on the speed with which leaders have been able to improve teaching.

Leaders and staff have put a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching in reading. There is now a clear approach to teaching reading using whole-class, high-quality texts. Staff plan a range of questions to check pupils' understanding of the books that they are reading. Sometimes, pupils tackle too many questions and their answers lack accuracy or a depth of understanding. A more organised system is in place to hear pupils read on a regular basis. However, some weaker readers are still not being heard to read by an adult on a regular basis. Overall, though, the new strategies are having a positive impact and attainment is slowly rising.

In mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils revisit and practise their calculation skills on a regular basis. Consequently, pupils' mathematical confidence and accuracy is improving. Sometimes, pupils use formal methods for calculation when they can clearly do the calculation in their head or with a jotting. Teaching does not put sufficient emphasis on how to be efficient in mathematics. In the strongest mathematics teaching there are regular and meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills. However, this is not consistent across the school. In some classrooms there is not enough reasoning taking place or pupils' answers lack depth in proving their mathematical understanding.

Pupils write with increasing regularity in English. Teachers are starting to use interesting stimuli to help pupils build ideas for their writing. For example, in Year 2 pupils enjoyed orally rehearsing their 'The three little pigs' story before writing. The quality of their written stories at the end of the unit was impressive. However, across the school there are some aspects of writing that need to be improved. Expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting are not high enough. Furthermore, pupils do not apply their understanding of punctuation accurately enough in their writing.

Following significant improvement of the early years since the school was inspected in 2016, leadership and provision in the early years continues to be a strength of the school. Staff have high expectations of pupils and most of the learning helps pupils to progress in the different areas of learning. Activities are generally well planned and engaging. Occasionally, some activities do not provide enough challenge. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and writing is a strength. Improvements in the quality of provision are reflected well in outcomes. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development rose by 20%. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the setting.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' behaviour in the majority of lessons is positive. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently so that pupils are aware of what is expected of them. Several pupils spoke about the fairness of the rewards and sanctions that are in place. Occasionally, when lessons lack challenge, some pupils switch off and do not concentrate as well as they should. The broad range of activities available at social times helps to maintain positive behaviour throughout the school day.

The leadership of behaviour is effective. Regular analysis of behaviour incidents enables leaders to identify and understand the needs of pupils who require additional support. Leaders make good use of external agencies to bring in additional expertise when required.

The school's approach to anti-bullying is impressive. 'This school takes different types of bullying very seriously' and 'we would not be bystanders if we saw bullying

happening' are comments from pupils that typified this strength. The anti-bullying ambassadors have led assemblies and put 'worry boxes' in each class. They enjoy their role and have given anti-bullying a platform in school. Leaders follow up bullying concerns quickly and thoroughly.

Leaders have worked hard to raise the profile of attendance among parents and pupils. There is a growing sense of responsibility about the importance of regular attendance at school. Attendance this academic year has risen sharply and is much higher than at the same point last year. Due to leaders' rigorous follow-up of absence, persistent absence has decreased considerably. During this autumn term 132 pupils have had 100% attendance, compared to just 74 pupils this time last year.

Outcomes for pupils

Attainment is rising but it is still not high enough across the school. Work in pupils' books and end of autumn term assessment information reflect this improving picture. For example, the positive work that has taken place in reading has started to have an impact on attainment. The school's internal test results and teacher assessments for the autumn term show that attainment in reading is now moving in the right direction. Leaders are focused on ensuring that attainment continues to rise.

In 2018 at the end of key stage 1, attainment in English was low when compared to the national average. Significant staffing disruption in this phase of the school has led to a lack of consistency in the quality teaching. Attainment in mathematics shows a more positive picture, with the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard rising by 12% compared to the previous year. While the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was low in 2018, current attainment in Year 1 phonics shows a more positive picture.

Pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 last academic year was not strong. As has been previously established in previous monitoring inspections, progress scores have been calculated using inaccurate key stage 1 assessments. This makes the progress scores an unreliable measure of how well pupils have done. However, leaders rightly acknowledge that at the end of the academic year 2017/18 attainment was still too low for all pupils and for disadvantaged pupils. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected and higher standards in mathematics rose slightly from 2017 to 2018. However, in reading these same measures declined and were not high enough. This cohort experienced several years of weak teaching earlier on in key stage 2 and, as a result, there were serious gaps in their knowledge.

External support

The local authority has not placed a sufficient focus on securing appropriate senior

leadership capacity for the spring term onwards. This lack of foresight and planning makes leadership fragile moving forwards. At this current point in time, it is just the headteacher who has non-class-based responsibilities for the spring term. Other senior leaders are teaching full-time. Considering the size and complex nature of the school, coupled with the improvement that is still required, this does not represent sufficient capacity.

A multi-academy trust was identified as the academy sponsor over 18 months ago. Leaders, governors and the local authority acknowledge that the identified sponsor does not seem to be moving forward with the conversion process. There has been a lack of urgency to resolve this situation. The local authority holds regular meetings with leaders and governors as a mechanism of challenge and support. Recently, the conversion process has not appeared on the agenda for some of these meetings. The local authority has a meeting planned early in the new year to find out if conversion with this sponsor is going to go forward or not. This uncertainty is not helpful to the school and needs resolving.

The school improvement adviser for the local authority continues to provide effective support to senior leaders in relation to teaching and learning. She has worked closely with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher to support the actions identified at the previous monitoring visit.