

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



26 February 2019

Mr Steve Nash
Headteacher
The Grove Primary School
Asfordby Road
Melton Mowbray
Leicestershire
LE13 0HN

Dear Mr Nash

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Grove Primary School

Following my visit with Helen Atkins, Ofsted Inspector, to the school on 5 to 6 February 2019, 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 July 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the Mowbray Education Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Lawson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders and governors identify clear, precise and measurable actions in their improvement plans
 - senior leaders implement an assessment system that accurately measures pupils' progress, and quickly identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind
 - senior leaders establish an accurate view of the quality of teaching, provide teachers with high-quality schemes of work and tailor teachers' professional development and training to target the needs of individual teachers
 - middle leaders develop their roles so that they support senior leaders in making whole-school improvements
 - senior leaders and governors use the additional funding effectively to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils and of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - senior leaders and governors use the school's physical education and sports premium funding effectively
 - governors make sure that the school's website meets the requirements for the publication of statutory information
 - academy trustees and governors increase the school's effectiveness in improving the quality of teaching and its impact on accelerating pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that all pupils make good progress or better, by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide pupils with a purpose to their learning
 - plan activities that are matched more accurately to the needs and abilities of different pupils, including the small number of most-able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - help pupils more consistently to understand how to be successful learners
 - develop their skills in asking probing questions that check on the pupils' understanding and stimulate pupils' thinking
 - provide pupils with opportunities to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics and comprehension skills in reading
 - provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and to demonstrate sustained knowledge.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning by ensuring that:
 - all staff have the highest expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning and apply the school's behaviour policy consistently
 - senior leaders use the behaviour-tracking system to identify targeted and measurable actions which will reduce the high number of behaviour incidents and fixed-term exclusions
 - leaders develop more effective ways of working with parents to increase pupils' attendance
 - teaching increases pupils' engagement and confidence, so that they play a greater role in their own learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of the early years provision by ensuring that leaders:
 - identify and tackle all areas of weakness, especially boys' slow progress
 - develop the outdoor learning environment to provide purposeful learning activities which contribute to developing a range of skills, including literacy and numeracy.

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

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

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 5 February 2019 to 6 February 2019

Evidence

The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, who is also the coordinator of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), middle leaders and other members of staff. The inspectors met with members of the local governing body, the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer of the Mowbray Education Trust, as well as the trust's Group Operation Manager and the trust SEND and behaviour adviser. The inspectors also met with parents and carers, and with pupils informally during the school day, as well as meeting formally with a group of pupils. Discussions explored a wide range of subjects, including safeguarding arrangements and evidence in relation to the areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in July 2017.

The inspectors observed a total of nine lessons, including the teaching of phonics. Lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. During these visits, the inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. The inspectors also examined, with school leaders, pupils' work in a sample of their books. The inspectors scrutinised a variety of documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' attainment and progress, the work of the local governing board, staff performance and leaders' plans for improvement. The range and quality of information provided on the school's website were also considered.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection of May 2018, a deputy headteacher has left the school. An assistant headteacher, who is also the coordinator of provision for pupils with SEND, was appointed from August 2018. Since the previous visit, the reviews of governance and of the use of the pupil premium have taken place.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has continued to improve. Leaders and other staff have ensured that the school has improved in all aspects identified as areas for improvement in the previous section 5 inspection. The cohesive leadership team has established a shared vision for improvement that is increasingly shared by all staff. Leaders have a clear, strategic, long-term vision for the school. They set out their priorities clearly in the school action plan, which identifies clear, measurable actions. They are establishing secure foundations for sustained and continued improvement. Parents who spoke with the inspectors were positive in all respects and demonstrated their awareness of improvements made by making comments such as, 'It's like a different school now.'

Leaders have carried out work to develop further the accuracy of teachers' assessments. They, together with the support of the trust, work with teachers, sharing expertise, to ensure that their evaluations of pupils' learning and progress are increasingly accurate. This is giving teachers a clearer understanding of the curriculum requirements for the pupils they teach and helping to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Leaders use assessment information to guide their priorities and inform the regular, focused discussions they have with teachers about pupils' progress, as well as the process for the management of teachers' performance. Leaders are able to more effectively hold staff to account. However, leaders are not as sharp as they could be in analysing information about pupils' attainment and progress, including for the early years, to identify more specific areas and targets for improvement.

Leaders are successfully tackling weaker teaching. They, with the support of the trust, provide extensive and relevant training and support for staff. The quality of teaching is continuing to improve. However, leaders have not ensured that their initiatives, for example the management of pupils' behaviour or the teaching of problem-solving and reasoning in mathematics, are applied consistently well by all staff. As a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, pupils' attainment and progress also remain variable.

The development of middle-leadership roles has continued to improve, although this still remains a weaker area. Leaders for mathematics and English particularly have benefited from the support of the trust's leaders for literacy and mathematics. The inspectors saw the impact of their and other staff's work in pupils' reading, writing and mathematics. All teachers have an identified subject leadership role, and many have received training. Middle leaders have created action plans for their areas of responsibility. However, middle leaders, particularly for subjects other than English and mathematics, are still not as effective as they could be in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress.

The recently appointed coordinator for the provision for pupils with SEND has ensured that the school's approaches for identifying pupils' needs, and putting into place appropriate support, have improved considerably. This was a concern at the previous visit. Leadership in this area of the school's work is now strong. The trust provides effective support. Pupils with SEND are now making strong progress from their starting points. Leaders now ensure that additional funding for pupils with SEND is used effectively.

Leaders have acted upon the recommendations of the review of the use of the pupil premium. Their use of the funding is now far more considered and focused. It is used to fund staff training and small-group support for pupils, as well as the breakfast club, which is helping to improve attendance. Leaders and other staff carefully review the impact of the funding on improving pupils' progress and attainment. The progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils are improving.

Leaders' use of the additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport is now also more sharply focused. The funding is used to provide coaching to improve the quality of teaching and provide increased opportunities for pupils to participate in PE and sporting activity.

Leaders have reviewed the impact of the previous uses of these funds on improving pupils' outcomes, and have created focused plans for how they will use the funding this year. Both these plans have been published on the school's website. The school now meets the requirements of what academies should publish on their websites.

The governing body and academy trustees have acted rapidly on the findings and recommendations of the review of governance that took place in July 2018. Members of the local governing body have clearly identified roles and regularly visit the school. They produce evaluative reports of their visits, summarising strengths and areas for improvement linked to the school improvement plan priorities. The minutes of governing body meetings show that they ask challenging questions, for example in relation to the progress of disadvantaged pupils or leaders' actions to improve attendance. Those responsible for governance now have a secure understanding of the school. They are now far more effective in holding leaders to account for pupils' outcomes and the impact of the use of additional funding. Their work is now helping the school to improve further.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching has also continued to improve. Teachers are raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve. The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers have received training in teaching reading skills throughout the school and are more effective in teaching comprehension skills. As part of leaders' work to develop the curriculum, teachers use carefully chosen novels to provide stimulating contexts for pupils to learn reading and writing skills. Pupils in key stage 2, for example, told an inspector how they were enjoying reading a 'Percy Jackson' novel as part of history topic work in which they are learning about Greek gods. Pupils say the new novel-based approach is making their learning more interesting. A typical comment was that, 'It helps us imagine a topic... you've got that impression in your mind.' This and other improvements made to the curriculum are making learning more purposeful for pupils.

Teachers often use their secure subject knowledge to asking probing questions to check pupils' understanding and develop their thinking. Many teachers plan sequences of lessons which effectively build pupils' learning over time. This was seen in pupils' work where they had used their learning from reading and analysing a class book to help them plan and write their own work. Some teachers provide clear guidance for pupils to improve their work, and in some classes pupils are taught effectively to edit and improve their work.

The strengths observed in lessons and seen in many pupils' books are not consistently evident across the school. Pupils are not taught consistently well how to check and improve their work. Sometimes, teachers do not use information about pupils' learning well enough to adapt their teaching nor plan activities appropriate to pupils' abilities or needs. Sometimes, the most able pupils are still not challenged well enough to make the progress they could. Sometimes, the least able pupils are not given appropriate work.

In many classes, pupils are often given appropriately challenging work in mathematics. Calculation skills are taught well throughout the school. Many teachers provide pupils with opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Some teachers promote pupils' fluency and deeper understanding well. However, again, leaders have not ensured that this is consistently the case.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive. Pupils are often keen to contribute in lessons and answer questions. However, some teachers still do not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour and this sometimes limits pupils' learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders and other staff have ensured that pupils' behaviour has continued to improve. The school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. Staff are creating an increasingly caring and respectful culture and ethos in the school. Pupils have much more positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. Pupils themselves recognise their school is a better place to learn. They are positive about their teachers. It is 'happier and joyful' some said. They said improvements to learning and behaviour in the school mean 'It makes you want to come to school.' Pupils are friendly and polite. They conduct themselves well in corridors and play together nicely at breaktimes. Many wished the inspectors a 'good morning'. In most lessons, pupils apply themselves to all that is asked of them. However, some staff do not insist upon high standards of behaviour nor apply the school's policy effectively. Inspectors observed some low-level disruption in some lessons.

Leaders record incidents of poor behaviour carefully, and constantly reflect on the most effective ways to bring about further improvements. The number of reported incidents has reduced considerably. Staff use positive strategies to manage pupils' behaviour and there is an inclusive school ethos. The formerly high number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced considerably. There have been no permanent exclusions in the current academic year.

Pupils say they feel safe, and parents who spoke with inspectors were unanimous in their view that their children are kept safe. Bullying is now rare. Some pupils who spoke with the inspectors said, 'Bullying does not happen any more. Teachers quickly sort any problems out.' There is a secure culture of safeguarding. Leaders' detailed records show they are tenacious in following up concerns about pupils'

welfare. They persevere to secure the involvement of external agencies where this is relevant. Staff training ensures that staff know the procedures they should follow if they have concerns or, for example, makes them aware of the government's 'Prevent' duty. The local governing board and the trust visit the school to check the school is meeting safeguarding requirements.

Leaders' and other staff's promotion of pupils' personal development is improving. The recent improvements to the school's curriculum are also having a positive impact on improving pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders and staff have recently introduced a set of school values, and pupils are taught to take greater responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils explained to the inspectors their understanding of 'compassion' and that, 'You should think about how other people feel and treat them fairly.' School initiatives, such as providing bagels, as well as leaders and other staff greeting pupils on the playground at the beginning of the school day, help promote pupils' positive well-being. Pupils are excited about the new library and this is helping to stimulate positive attitudes to reading. As a result of leaders' and other staff's work, pupils are increasingly proud of their school.

At the end of 2018, attendance was below the national average and persistent absence was above average, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Leaders, the family support workers and the trust leader for attendance have taken decisive actions to improve attendance. They track attendance and punctuality carefully. They work closely with families of pupils who are persistently absent. Parents and pupils understand the reasons for the school's work to improve attendance. Current information shows that attendance, including that for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, is improving considerably compared to the same point last year. However, improving attendance even further remains a continuing priority.

Outcomes for pupils

Standards, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics are improving. At the end of 2018, pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 2 improved in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the required standard in the Year 1 national phonics screening check was above the national average. However, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 was below the national averages for reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils' current work shows an improving picture. Many pupils throughout the school, including disadvantaged pupils, are making strong progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with SEND now make strong progress from their starting points.

In the early years, children, including boys, make a positive start to their education. Children make good progress from their starting points. In 2018, the proportion of

children achieving a good level of development was above the national average. The leader of the early years ensures that the indoor and outdoor classrooms are carefully planned to provide a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities to promote children's progress, including in reading, writing, language development and mathematics. Children concentrate and persevere. There are many activities that engage the interest of boys, an aspect identified at the previous inspection as lacking. Boys were observed, for example, happily working together using their phonics skills, matching sounds to letters, and then writing words. A group of children was observed discussing, using the language of reasoning, what numbers they would need to fill in some gaps in a number line. Teaching is strong and expectations of what children can achieve are high.

Pupils' work throughout the school shows how, through well-structured activities, pupils are taught to develop their reading comprehension skills. Pupils' handwriting and presentation are improving. Staff encourage pupils to take increasing care and pride in their work. In mathematics, pupils practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills and often make strong progress in learning calculation methods. However, overall, pupils' attainment and progress remain too variable.

External support

The trust provides effective support for staff training to improve the quality of teaching and leadership. They fully support the work of the senior leadership team. They draw upon expertise within the trust. This has been particularly effective in improving the leadership of English, mathematics, SEND leadership and provision, and supporting improvements to attendance. The trust carefully targets training and development work to support many aspects of the school's work.