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Mrs Salima Ducker
Executive Headteacher
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Spey Road
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Reading
Berkshire
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Dear Mrs Ducker

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ranikhet Academy

Following my visit to your school on 3–4 April 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 that you gave during the inspection and for the time that 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 December 2018.

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 trust’s statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school’s improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all of 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 intervention board, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Reach 2 multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children’s services for Reading. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin
Her Majesty’s Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2018.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - urgent reviews are conducted to safeguarding procedures, so that records are reliable and accurate, and all potential welfare and well-being concerns are acted on promptly, appropriately and effectively
 - governors fully evaluate and monitor all safeguarding, safety risk assessment and medical recording systems in order to hold leaders to account for their actions to support the most vulnerable pupils
 - the leadership of SEND is sufficiently rigorous, and strategies are implemented to improve provision and ensure strong pupil progress
 - middle leaders are suitably skilled, so that they can support the drive for rapid improvement
 - all staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' progress
 - the multi-academy trust and governors fully evaluate the impact of additional funding on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and personal development
 - leaders improve the breadth and quality of the curriculum by ensuring that teachers' planning systematically develops pupils' knowledge and skills in science and the foundation subjects
 - relationships with parents are strengthened to restore trust in the school's work
 - the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively to increase pupils' participation in regular physical activity.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that teachers:
 - consider what pupils know and can do and provide teaching that builds on their knowledge and understanding and matches their needs
 - deploy support staff more effectively to improve pupils' outcomes, particularly those pupils with SEND
 - raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve and increase the level of challenge for the most able pupils
 - develop pupils' reasoning and problem solving in mathematics
 - promote the sequential development of reading and writing skills more effectively, particularly in key stage 2.
- Improve attendance, particularly for those pupils who are persistently absent.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 3 April to 4 April 2019

Evidence

During the inspection, I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, the head of school, middle leaders, staff, parents, the vice-chair of trustees, the non-executive director of the multi-academy trust and a member of the intervention board, the regional director of Reach 2 multi-academy trust and two associate subject leaders for English and early years. I met formally with two groups of pupils and spoke to pupils informally when observing the school's work. I conducted joint lesson observations with you and looked at work in pupils' books. The school's action plan was evaluated.

Context

This was the first monitoring visit since the school's section 5 inspection in December 2018. The executive headteacher is currently at the school in a full-time capacity to support the development of school leadership. The multi-academy trust has also provided three associate subject leaders to support improvements in teaching and learning in English, mathematics, early years and phonics. Since the inspection, a new deputy headteacher responsible for improving the quality of teaching and learning has been appointed. An additional special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) was appointed in 2018 to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Since the last inspection, the multi-academy trust has increased the associate safeguarding lead's time to 3 days per week to ensure that safeguarding arrangements at the school are fit for purpose. A Year 3 teacher and Nursery teacher have been appointed and will take up their posts at the end of April 2019. The number of pupils on the school's roll has fallen slightly. An intervention board was established by the multi-academy trust in January 2019 in place of the governing body.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

School leaders and governors have worked hard to address the previous inspection findings. The executive headteacher meets weekly with the regional director from the multi-academy trust to discuss and evaluate improvements. As a result, leaders have established effective monitoring and tracking systems and staff are developing their teaching skills. However, senior leaders, trustees and the intervention board recognise the need to drive further improvements.

The trust's statement of action identifies clearly the areas for improvement noted in the December 2018 inspection report. The leadership team bring a sense of urgency to the school's work in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. You have successfully revised safeguarding systems at the school. For example, all staff who work at the school undergo the necessary checks prior to working with children. Through the appointment of two deputy designated safeguarding leads

and the establishment of an electronic recording system, the school has eradicated the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Safeguarding leads analyse and evaluate the risks to pupils in the school swiftly and effectively. Staff receive appropriate training in child protection, extremism and radicalisation alongside regular updates. Pupils have warm, nurturing relationships with staff which enable them to feel well cared for.

You and your head of school convey well your vision for the future success of the school. You have rightly prioritised the rapid improvement of teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics for all pupils, including for disadvantaged pupils. The school's improvement plan provides clear timescales, key responsibilities and effective success criteria to facilitate improvements. The intervention board has ensured that progress towards the actions in the plan is reviewed regularly to ensure that changes to the quality of education are effective. However, the improvement plan does not acknowledge explicitly the barriers faced by pupils who speak English as an additional language. You and your leadership team have not prioritised the acquisition and development of standard English vocabulary and grammar in the curriculum. You agree that weaknesses in pupils' oral and written English pose difficulties for pupils accessing the curriculum with confidence and success. Leaders acknowledge that this is a priority for the school. Additionally, the strategic overview for reading and writing is not as cohesive as the overview for mathematics. You acknowledge that the English curriculum requires further improvements to ensure that pupils read high-quality texts and develop their writing skills for a breadth of purposes, audiences and texts.

The school's policies are up to date and on the school website. Leaders meet regularly both at school and trust level to evaluate the school's progress in addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. With additional support from the multi-academy trust, you have reviewed the effectiveness of the school's assessment systems. You have ensured more focused internal and external moderation of pupils' work to make sure that assessments are accurate and fit for purpose across key stages 1 and 2. As a result, staff identify pupils who are struggling more readily than previously and provide effective support to help them catch up. Together with your leadership team, you have driven the use of the school's feedback policy. Where it works well, pupils respond willingly to the teachers' feedback and make better progress. However, consistent practice is not yet embedded across the school.

New leaders understand their roles and responsibilities well. For example, a part-time SENCo provides effective support to the full-time SENCo at the school. Together they have driven improvements in the academic, social and emotional support for pupils with SEND. Having conducted an in-depth audit of the provision at the school, they have a very clear understanding of the areas for improvement. For example, they have developed effective learning plans for these pupils which are reviewed regularly. However, leaders agree that these plans are not yet effectively used across all year groups.

You and your leadership team have ensured that pupils experience a well-constructed physical education (PE) curriculum. Pupils develop skills and knowledge in a range of sports. You have also embedded a clear assessment system that informs the planning of lessons to ensure that pupils make good progress. As a result, pupils are enthused and engaged in PE lessons. However, you acknowledge that other subjects in the curriculum such as science, music and French require further improvement. Leaders are currently reviewing the science curriculum as you recognise that it does not develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding effectively.

The leadership of early years is effective. The early years curriculum encompasses clear transition from Nursery to Reception to enable children to make strong progress in their early development. In addition, the curriculum is skilfully structured to develop children's language and communications skills through a breadth of activities and tasks. For example, children are immersed in the imaginative world of a garden centre and communicate effectively with each other and staff through play. Leaders ensure that staff shape and extend children's utterances with a focus on clarity and accuracy.

An intervention board replaced the governing body in January 2019 to strengthen the oversight of improvements at the school. A review of governance was conducted at the end of February 2019. The multi-academy trust has acted upon the recommendations in the review. For example, the review recommended greater clarity about the role of governance in securing improvements at the school. Consequently, the intervention board asks for accurate and pertinent information about pupils' progress alongside the quality of improvements in teaching and learning.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning in most year groups. In Year 6, for example, pupils are attentive and conscientious. Pupils and staff have constructive, nurturing relationships. Pupils generally respond well to the tasks set by teachers. For example, Year 6 pupils were observed enthusiastically solving challenging ratio problems in a mathematics lesson with effective support.

With a more accurate understanding of pupils' starting points than previously, due to external and internal moderation of pupils' work, teachers are beginning to plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils effectively. However, the quality of teaching and learning is not consistent across the school. Teachers do not systematically develop pupils' use of vocabulary and grammar so that they can understand more challenging texts and select appropriate language for their writing tasks. Many pupils in all year groups struggle with articulating their ideas both orally and in their writing. The development of oracy and language skills is not fully addressed across the curriculum.

The quality of mathematics teaching and learning is inconsistent. Through well-sequenced lessons that enable pupils to build on their prior knowledge, some pupils make stronger progress. However, this is not the case in all year groups. Teachers do not fully address gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a consequence, some pupils cannot access more complex mathematical problems as they lack fluency in the basic skills of addition, division, multiplication and subtraction. In some classes, pupils are making progress in the development of their evaluation of different mathematical approaches. However, this is not consistently so across the school. While the teaching of pupils with SEND has improved due to an increasing focus and ongoing training for all staff in meeting the complex needs of pupils, practice is not consistently effective across the school.

The teaching and learning of phonics has improved markedly. Through external support from the multi-academy trust, teachers and teaching assistants have adopted a systematic approach that enables pupils to draw on their understanding of the link between sounds and letters. Pupils apply their understanding of the sounds of letters to their writing. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning to read and most pupils make strong progress.

Teaching and learning in early years is a strength of the school. Children are enthused through awe-inspiring activities that engage and enthral. For example, the Reception teacher used an imaginary letter from her cousin to introduce the children to a breadth of language and knowledge about the chicks that had hatched in the Reception area.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have worked hard to provide a harmonious learning environment within the school. Pupils reflect positively on the friendliness of the school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. For example, Year 1 pupils learn how to keep safe through the NSPCC's programme about protecting their personal space. While pupils have opportunities to learn how to keep safe while riding a bicycle, many pupils have not fully understood the importance of wearing a cycle helmet for protection and cycle in the school grounds when people are walking.

Pupils can define bullying accurately. Pupils state that staff address bullying when it occurs but that it is not always effective. However, pupils' conduct in class is generally attentive, respectful and supportive.

The previous inspection report noted the high levels of persistent absence. Through daily monitoring and a range of incentives, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced substantially. Although the absence figure is lower than last year, it is still above the national average.

Pupils have opportunities to voice their views through the school council and the house-captain system. Pupils feel that their voices are heard and enjoy the

additional responsibilities. For example, the school council relished planning the Red Nose fundraising festivities for the school.

Outcomes for pupils

The inconsistent quality of teaching and learning leads to variable rates of progress for pupils. Some teachers do not consistently use assessment information effectively to inform planning and teaching. Consequently, pupils do not make strong progress in many areas of the curriculum. Staff do not consistently address the language barriers that many pupils encounter. As a consequence, many pupils do not make enough progress as they cannot access some subjects confidently and successfully. Pupils with SEND are making better progress in some year groups due to recently embedded monitoring systems and improved support. However, the progress made by pupils with SEND across the school is too variable.

Pupils have largely positive attitudes towards learning. They are respectful of the views of others and help each other. Disruptive behaviour rarely gets in the way of learning in the classroom. You, your leadership team and the intervention board agree that improvements in the quality of the curriculum and teaching and learning are required to enable pupils to make better progress in every area of the curriculum.

Children in early years make strong progress in the development of their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Through carefully structured activities and skilful adult support, children learn to extend their language skills and enjoy learning.