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30 April 2019

Mr Dominic Crompton  
Headteacher  
Skilts School  
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Redditch  
Worcestershire  
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Dear Mr Crompton

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Skilts School**

Following my visit with Alun Williams, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 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 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in December 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 may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Deb Jenkins  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2017**

- As a matter of urgency, improve pupils' behaviour and their safety by:
  - minimising the use of physical intervention
  - carefully monitoring the use and appropriateness of physical intervention
  - tracking behaviour incidents with more rigour, analysing the tracking information to discern any patterns and trends and responding accordingly
  - putting in place interventions as necessary to help pupils manage and improve their behaviour
  - providing staff with training so they properly understand and respond appropriately to pupils' challenging behaviour
  - supporting teachers to devise effective strategies for the management of pupils with particularly challenging behaviour.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - safeguarding procedures are clearly understood and adhered to by all staff, especially in relation to making a written record of any concerns
  - governors have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and contribute fully to the school's strategic direction
  - all pupils have their full entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum which meets their individual needs
  - the curriculum and teaching are carefully adapted for those pupils who are not thriving and progressing with the current offer
  - leaders carefully monitor and evaluate the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils so that it is used well to help them make good progress
  - leadership is more effectively distributed so that middle leaders have a wider impact on pupils' achievement across the school.
  
- Ensure that teaching is at least consistently good and leads to good outcomes by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - identifying gaps in pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills, and addressing these rapidly
  - providing work which is more challenging and makes pupils think harder, especially for the most able pupils
  - develop pupils' reading skills across the curriculum so they are given more

frequent opportunities to practise and improve their reading.

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

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 April 2019**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the associate senior leader, two middle leaders, the pastoral team and a group of staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and the chief executive officer (CEO) of Forward Education Trust and spoke to a local authority school and governance officer. Inspectors visited all classes in the school, usually with senior leaders, and observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors were not able to speak with any parents and carers but considered the results of the school's most recent parent survey. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's post-Ofsted action plan; policies; information about progress and attainment, attendance, behaviour and exclusions; external monitoring reports and information available on the school's website. The lead inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher in their capacity as designated and deputy designated safeguarding leads (DSL) and looked at safeguarding information, including checks on staff recruitment and pupils' files.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, staffing has remained relatively stable. The acting deputy headteacher has been appointed to the post permanently, and another class teacher has been appointed and is due to take up her post in the summer term. The school is currently advertising for a literacy leader which will have the potential to increase the capacity of middle leaders further. One member of the pastoral team has left, as has one teaching assistant. Two teaching assistants who previously worked at the school on a supply basis have been recruited to the school permanently. The associate senior leader concludes his work at the end of the spring term but will provide occasional support to the school in his new role of improvement adviser for the trust.

The local authority has agreed that the school will relocate to new premises within the city boundary. This is unlikely to happen before 2021. Staff feel unsettled by the changes as leaders are unable to provide any additional information until the project has full approval from the city council. Ongoing financial constraints continue to have an impact on the pace of the academy conversion. This is because the trust is working to mitigate the impact of the school's current financial position on other schools in the trust.

Leaders are currently working with the local authority to increase the number of pupils on the school's roll. Two additional mobile classrooms will be required to provide suitable accommodation for these pupils until the proposed new school is opened.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have ensured that the pace of improvement has been sustained since the last visit. There is now a clearer leadership structure to enable the school leaders to build on their current improvements. The CEO of the trust has provided invaluable support to the school to ensure that proposed staffing structures are sustainable. Well-planned professional development opportunities are improving staff's skills and ensuring that pupils receive the support they need. Despite the unsettling nature of the planned changes, there is still a real sense of optimism, shared by staff and leaders alike. This is because they perceive that the school is in a much better position than it has been for quite some time. The pastoral team, despite losing a member of staff, continue their proactive approach to supporting staff in managing pupils' behaviour. Senior leaders have modelled expectations well for this team and, as a result, the team now have the skills to work successfully, with only minimal oversight from senior leaders.

The IEB now has a full complement of members with a suitable range of skills to enable them to challenge and hold leaders to account. The board receives detailed information from school leaders to enable them to identify emerging and improving trends in all areas of the school's performance. While more time has now been allocated in meetings to allow members to focus on information about teaching, learning and outcomes, it is still not enough. The quality of teaching and learning is a priority area for improvement for the school and more time and attention needs to be dedicated to this area.

Safeguarding continues to be effective in the school. The headteacher has now assumed the role of DSL, supported by the deputy headteacher in her capacity of deputy DSL. Leaders now take a collaborative approach to managing any safeguarding concerns. Concerns continue to be followed up with rigour, and the strong relationships that leaders have built with other schools means that concerns can be followed through, even if a pupil has moved on. Safeguarding induction procedures for supply staff have improved. Staff attend daily briefings which often incorporate any safeguarding updates. Leaders keep staff well informed about any safeguarding concerns which may affect their day-to-day support for pupils. Leaders are due to move to an electronic recording system in the summer term to document any welfare concerns. Staff continue to be recruited safely, with suitable pre-employment checks.

Leaders recognise that there is still insufficient planning of the use of pupil premium funding and plan to address this as a matter of urgency. The use of funding for children looked after is well documented, and support for this group of pupils is carefully thought out and targeted to meet individual needs.

Leaders' post-Ofsted action plan is not as relevant as it once was. The school currently lacks a formal self-evaluation, which could be used to inform more

contemporary planning for school improvement.

The deputy headteacher continues to work to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Since the last visit, she has begun to work with two middle leaders to develop their skills in the monitoring and evaluation of their curriculum areas of responsibility. These middle leaders have now begun to carry out work scrutinies with some success and to develop their curriculum areas further. Due to being new to their roles, middle leaders are still reliant on guidance from senior leaders. However, they bring an enthusiasm to their new responsibilities and a desire to improve, appreciating the opportunities that they have been given.

The curriculum continues to provide an engaging range of learning opportunities for pupils, underpinned by leaders' clear rationale for the changes they have made, and the knowledge and skills they intend pupils to develop. The lifelong learning strand of the curriculum shows clearly planned learning opportunities that are developed following school assemblies, for example on themes such as internet safety. However, this careful planning is not yet consistent practice in all subjects. The implementation of the curriculum is more mixed and is dependent on teachers' abilities to put this into practice. Leaders recognise that more work is needed in order to ensure that teachers enable pupils to build on their prior knowledge in a systematic way.

The school's recent parent survey shows that parents are much more positive about the work of the school. Over half of the parents responded to the school's most recent survey, and indicated that their children were happy and safe at school. All said they would now recommend the school to another parent.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Excellent relationships and the now well-established routines and expectations make for a much-improved climate for learning. Staff use praise and reinforcement effectively to maintain pupils' focus and engagement in learning. Behaviour is managed well by staff in the classroom and as a result, little learning is disrupted.

As a result of the professional development that all staff have received, the teaching of phonics is much improved and is now done so in a systematic way. The daily phonics sessions are helping to improve pupils' reading skills quickly. Inspectors saw pupils gaining in confidence in their reading because they can decode and read words well. Reading books are well matched to pupils' phonic abilities. Staff are now more confident in their teaching of phonics and told inspectors that they can see the positive difference the teaching of phonics is making to pupils' reading skills.

The additional support planned for pupils who are making the least progress has been made much more effective since the last visit because it has been planned and delivered consistently well, and more frequently than previously. The intervention leader works closely with the deputy headteacher to identify pupils who need

additional help, before liaising with the class teachers. This ensures that support is well matched to pupils' needs and complements the learning which takes place in the classroom. Assessment information and pupils' work show the positive impact that this support has had for pupils in their literacy and mathematics development.

Teachers are now more confident to create a culture that enables pupils to make mistakes in their work because it helps them learn about what went wrong. Inspectors saw pupils working confidently, correcting their own work without a fuss if they had made a mistake.

While the quality of teaching and learning is an improving picture, there remains too much inconsistency in teachers' practice. Overall, practice in the lower school is stronger because teachers plan lessons that are better matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils are better engaged and making progress in their learning. Where teaching and learning is weaker, pupils are not learning because the purpose of the session is not clear, or what is delivered is too easy or too hard. Some class teachers must cater for a wide range of abilities, and for these groups whole-class teaching is less successful because it does not cater for pupils' differing abilities.

Leaders are in the process of moving to a new assessment system to better capture information about pupils' progress and attainment. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers are not using information about what pupils know and can do to plan learning that matches pupils' abilities well enough. Teachers do not have a deep enough subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics, about how pupils' knowledge and understanding of concepts develops over time. As a result, pupils are often presented with tasks that they are unable to complete without significant support. This is because they do not have the prior knowledge to support their understanding of key mathematical concepts.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Further improvements in pupils' behaviour mean that Skilts is now a much calmer, more orderly school. From the moment they arrive, pupils are warmly welcomed into school and enjoy breakfast before beginning lessons. Behaviour is managed consistently well in class and around the school because staff and pupils have developed strong relationships.

Physical interventions are reducing further. Last year, interventions took place, on average, 28 times per week. Currently, this has reduced to six per week. Inspectors saw that when interventions take place, they are carried out sensitively and for the shortest time possible. A downward trend is also evident in the number of serious incidents taking place.

The introduction of the 'golden ticket' scheme, which further reinforces the 'going for gold' system, has contributed to improvements in pupils' behaviour. Pupils are motivated to work for a golden ticket, awarded for improved behaviours for

learning. They talked enthusiastically to inspectors about how they can collect and exchange them for a trip to the cinema, or to a theme park, for example. Leaders use the golden ticket system as another benchmark to monitor good behaviour.

The pastoral team's meticulous analysis of information about pupils' behaviour enables them to share information with staff purposefully. For example, staff are told when a pupil may have just missed out on a ticket, or a pupil has earned a ticket for the first time. This enables staff to offer additional support and encouragement on an individual basis, which impacts positively on behaviour in the classroom and around the school.

The curriculum enables pupils to learn about risks to their personal safety, and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have benefited from learning about important topics such as internet safety, knife crime, gang violence and hate crime. This work has been supported by external visitors to the school. Inspectors heard pupils debating the meaning of hate crimes in a personal, social and health education lesson. They showed that they had some understanding of hate crimes based on a person's race or disability.

Attendance at school continues to improve. Just under a quarter of pupils are now persistently absent, which is a reduction of 50% on last year's figures. Nearly half of the pupils attend school for at least 95% of the time. The well-organised approach to managing and rewarding attendance, along with the more engaging curriculum, means that pupils are keen to attend school.

Fixed-term exclusions are now rarely used. Since November 2018 there has only been one fixed-term exclusion, when there were 14 last year. There have been no permanent exclusions.

Some pupils' poorer attendance is out of the school's control. For example, the local authority, who provides transport for pupils to the school, does not provide any relief cover for transport guides. As a result, if a guide is absent, some pupils are removed from the route for that day to ensure pupils' safety. The location of the school does not make it easy for parents who rely on public transport to bring their children to school when this occurs.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school's progress information from the autumn term reflects an improving picture in writing and mathematics, as seen in pupils' books. Currently, progress is not as strong in reading because the recent improvements in phonics teaching are only likely to be seen in the school's assessment information for the spring term, which has not been produced yet. The progress that pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) make is stronger than the progress made by pupils overall. Leaders attribute this improved progress to staff training in ASD and changes to the classroom environments to make them more ASD friendly.



The school's new assessment system is likely to enable teachers to set more challenging targets to focus on helping pupils narrow their gaps in attainment. It is too early for leaders to be able to generate any information yet.

Overall, there is an improving picture in the outcomes which pupils are achieving over time, but there is some variation between subjects. These differences reflect the mixed picture of teaching seen across the school.

### **External support**

The school continues to benefit from the support it receives from the Forward Education Trust. Staff are able to participate in professional development opportunities and liaise with staff from other schools in the trust. The trust has recently supported the development of the school's new assessment system. The trust carries out twice-yearly checks on the school's overall effectiveness and liaises with the local authority's representative, who monitors the school's work on a frequent basis. The CEO has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She is supporting leaders to work speedily to strengthen leadership capacity at all levels.