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14 June 2019

Mr Peter Bloomfield  
Principal  
Great Yarmouth Primary Academy  
Dickens Avenue  
Great Yarmouth  
Norfolk  
NR30 3DT

Dear Mr Bloomfield

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Great Yarmouth Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Richard Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 June 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 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 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 the evidence I am recommending that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Mellors  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2018.**

- Improve leadership, management and governance, by:
  - urgently reviewing and improving the systems and procedures to effectively manage pupils' poor behaviour
  - taking a realistic and systematic approach to self-evaluation that identifies weaknesses as well as strengths
  - ensuring that support from the leaders in the school is effective and that it prioritises improvements based on urgent need
  - providing effective support and training for teaching staff to ensure that they can all deliver the curriculum effectively
  - evaluating the impact of support for pupils with SEND and taking necessary action.
- Improve teaching, learning, assessment and achievement, by ensuring that:
  - the teaching of phonics is effective so that pupils have the reading skills they need to access the curriculum
  - the standard of writing improves across the school
  - teaching and behaviour management strategies support progress, and do not hinder it through time being wasted in lessons.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils, by:
  - making sure that the school's systems and procedures for managing the most challenging behaviour are effective, including the use of the reflection room
  - providing effective training and support for staff who regularly manage challenging behaviour.
- Improve the effectiveness of early years by:
  - ensuring that teachers use their assessments well to plan for the needs, interests and stages of development of children
  - providing more challenging and purposeful opportunities for children to practise and develop their early reading, writing and number skills when choosing their own activities
  - reviewing the allocation of resources, including staffing, to ensure that they are sufficient to help children develop well across all areas of learning, including when outdoors.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 4 June 2019 to 5 June 2019**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, met with the principal and other senior leaders, middle leaders responsible for English, mathematics and the curriculum, a group of teachers, two representatives of the trust and four members of the local governing board. Inspectors observed pupils' learning and behaviour in lessons, spoke to two groups of pupils as well as hearing children read. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers informally at the start and the end of the day.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, there has been substantial change in the senior leadership of the school. A newly appointed principal took up his position in January 2019. A new vice-principal was also appointed and started at the same time. The acting assistant principal was made permanent and has responsibility for leading the early years and key stage 1. A second assistant principal has been appointed and will take up her position as leader of key stage 2 in September 2019.

There has been a restructure of subject leadership roles. A new English leader was appointed in April 2019 and two teachers have been given responsibility for leading mathematics and the wider curriculum.

Two members of the teaching staff have left the school and replacements have been appointed.

Currently, there is a planned cycle of redecoration which means that some classroom space is not available while the scheduled work is completed.

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

On his arrival, the principal made a swift evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This evaluation is accurate and has helped to inform which areas of the school's performance are addressed as a matter of urgency. As part of this process, the principal has placed a strong focus on developing positive relationships between leaders and staff. This has helped to galvanise the school's team and build a culture of mutual trust and respect. Consequently, staff morale is significantly better. However, some changes to the school's leadership are quite recent and the journey of improvement is at an early stage. While it is evident that there are improvements, such as pupils' behaviour, some key weaknesses remain.

The school's improvement plan makes clear links to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Priorities accurately identify how these issues

will be addressed. The plan demonstrates a timely awareness of the order in which actions are taken and how these will be reviewed. However, the plan is not precise about the impact leaders expect to see and how success is measured. This means that leaders' accountability is not clear.

Governors have ensured that they have a range of expertise and skills to challenge and support school leaders. They work well with the trust and make use of information from different sources to hold leaders to account. However, for governors to understand fully whether leaders' actions are successful, they must sharpen the measures used in the school improvement plan.

The work to improve the systems and procedures to manage pupils' behaviour is a key focus for both the principal and vice-principal. A consistent approach, and setting high expectations for behaviour, has been successfully established across the school. All staff have received in-depth training to develop their understanding and build their confidence in using the school's approaches. The visibility of school leaders and the modelling of their expectations have ensured that the school is a safe and orderly environment. Pupils have responded positively to these changes. They welcome visitors in the 'GYPA way', with either a friendly handshake or a courteous greeting. Parents are also quick to comment on the improvements in pupils' behaviour and consider that since the arrival of the new principal the school is now a calmer place. Since the introduction of the new systems, there has been a significant decline in the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Senior leaders are starting to make effective use of their monitoring activities to evaluate the impact of the school's effectiveness. A planned cycle of monitoring links to the key priorities for improvement. From the information gathered, leaders are developing an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses across all aspects of the school's work. Some leaders who are new to their role are receiving support from the trust to develop their skills of monitoring and evaluation. This means that leadership at all levels is not yet as strong as it could be.

Leaders have rightly focused their efforts upon improving pupils' behaviour. This work has been successful and is now providing the right climate for learning. Teachers are receiving regular feedback from senior leaders following their monitoring. Plans to support teachers' delivery of the curriculum have been made by leaders. Some cohorts are receiving specific support in the new approaches leaders plan to take, such as in mathematics. Where some new appointments of experienced teachers have been made, then teaching is stronger. However, this remains inconsistent and not all teachers have the subject knowledge and skills to deliver all aspects of the curriculum effectively.

The substantive special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is currently on maternity leave. The position is being covered by the assistant SENCo who is receiving support from a colleague within the trust. Leaders are better informed about the needs of pupils because there is a robust system that is used to track

pupils' progress and their needs. However, actions taken to improve the support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have only recently taken place and their impact has not been evaluated.

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

Leaders have carried out a review of pupils' phonic knowledge. Groups are now matched to discrete teaching sessions. A system for checking pupils' progress is now in place. This is reviewed regularly to identify where additional support is required to help pupils catch up. All staff who teach phonics have received training so that there is a consistent approach across the sessions. This is supporting pupils' progress by helping them to recognise a range of different sounds.

Leaders have not established a consistent approach to the teaching of reading. This requires urgent attention. The books used by children to practise their early reading skills are not well matched to their phonic knowledge. Pupils who struggle with reading are not provided with materials that help them to develop their fluency and improve their skills of decoding. The system of recording pupils' reading is inconsistent and there are insufficient opportunities for these groups of pupils to practise their reading. Consequently, their progress remains weak.

The standard of pupils' writing is variable. Where teaching is stronger, pupils use models to help scaffold their ideas and write with greater fluency. This is supported using whole-class texts which give pupils access to a wider range of vocabulary. Where teachers have higher expectations, pupils' handwriting remains consistent and there is greater accuracy with spelling. However, on many occasions, misconceptions are not addressed, and pupils make repeated errors because they are not provided with the guidance or support to improve their work. Leaders have carried out an audit of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' writing. A strategy has been developed but not yet implemented. Pupils' progress is hindered through their poor understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

The consistent implementation of the school's behaviour strategies ensures that time is used productively for learning. Teachers set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils respond to adults' direction promptly. Pupils are attentive and settle to work quickly. They are keen to learn and offer responses to any questions asked by teachers. Pupils only become less engaged when the teaching is not appropriately matched to meet their needs.

Teachers do not use questioning effectively to extend pupils' thinking. Pupils are often asked to respond by providing simple answers. Teachers are not able to assess the understanding of pupils with different abilities because they do not seek responses from a range of pupils. The activities planned by teachers are often similar for all pupils. This prevents the most able pupils making the progress they should.

Teaching in the early years is making better use of assessment to plan a range of activities across all areas of learning. Opportunities to promote children's early reading, writing and number skills are evident within the learning environment. For example, one child counted seashells while working in the sand tray.

Children readily explore and play well together. Established routines ensure that children feel safe. Positive relationships with adults support children's social and emotional development well. Not all adults are equally skilled at developing children's critical thinking skills through their questioning. Further work is required to ensure that children are consistently challenged when working independently.

The outdoor learning areas are well resourced. Additional equipment has been provided to support children's learning such as their physical development. However, opportunities for children to develop their early literacy and mathematical development are limited in the outdoor learning environment.

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

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. They say that they have good relationships with their teachers, who would give them support when needed. Pupils explained that their behaviour was better because they understood and followed their new rules. Pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection was delightful. No lessons were disrupted through poor behaviour and lunchtimes were both sociable and enjoyable occasions.

Leaders have ensured that staff have received appropriate training to help them manage all types of behaviour. In lessons, pupils respond positively to adults' expectations so that time is used well for learning. Teachers say that they feel well supported by leaders and consistent approaches have made an effective contribution to pupils' improved behaviour. Adults are encouraged to spot pupils' positive behaviour and pupils work hard at making the 'right choices'. Sanctions are now used appropriately by staff and there is an emphasis of quickly reintegrating pupils back into the classroom when there have been any concerns.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Teachers have been supported in the use of the school's assessment system. Their increased confidence is now ensuring that the information it provides is accurate. Leaders also provide support through moderation activities to check that assessments accurately reflect pupils' achievements. Teachers are now better placed to use the information from the system to identify gaps in pupils' learning.

Work in pupils' books shows that progress in reading, writing and mathematics is insufficient in some cohorts across the school. Where it is stronger, it reflects some newer strategies and approaches. However, these are quite recent and there is not enough evidence to demonstrate that improvement is being sustained over time.

This is especially true for the most able pupils, who are not always given work to challenge them.

### **External support**

The trust continues to check the school's progress regularly and ensures that the support is tailored to meet the needs of the school. The trust has confidence in the new principal and the skills of the leadership team. This is being demonstrated through the impact of the changes leaders have made to improve the school. The trust plans to provide expertise for reviews later in the term to ensure that new leaders make accurate evaluations which inform the next steps on the school's continued journey.