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Mr Andrew Kitchen
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kitchen

Special measures monitoring inspection of Stafford Leys Community Primary School

Following my visit with Vic Wilkinson, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 2–3 July 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 April 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 school’s statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school’s improvement action 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 board of trustees, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children’s services for Leicestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Hazel Henson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - leaders precisely define and rigorously monitor plans for school improvement
 - governors and senior leaders challenge, and hold to account, all staff to urgently improve outcomes for pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most able
 - leaders use the pupil premium funding to rapidly improve the progress of the disadvantaged pupils
 - the governing body checks the school's performance more systematically and holds school leaders robustly to account for pupil and staff underperformance
 - leaders monitor thoroughly and urgently improve attendance of those pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and thereby outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers accurately assess and use information about pupils' attainment and progress to plan activities which engage and motivate, and are suitably challenging, particularly for the most able
 - teachers have high expectations of all pupils and particularly the disadvantaged and the most able pupils
 - teachers address pupils' misconceptions quickly and support pupils to learn from their mistakes
 - teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics
 - teachers better match reading books to pupils' abilities and offer more opportunities for pupils to improve their inference, deduction and comprehension skills.
- Improve the quality of provision in early years by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan purposeful and engaging experiences which allow children to think critically and build on their previous learning
 - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants support children's learning more effectively, particularly their communication and language skills.

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

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 2 July 2019 to 3 July 2019

Evidence

Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. They met with the chair of the trust and other governors who are members of the academy improvement board. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers at the beginning of the day and with groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke with the external consultant appointed by governors as a school improvement partner.

Inspectors observed the learning taking place in every year group and examined a range of books with senior leaders. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and assemblies and at playtime.

Inspectors scrutinised the single central record. They reviewed a range of documents that the school provided related to the safer recruitment of staff, school improvement, the monitoring of teaching and learning and the progress that pupils make.

Context

Since the inspection in April 2018, one member of staff has left the school. One member of staff is currently taking maternity leave and interim arrangements are in place to teach these classes. There have been no changes to the substantive leadership team. The chair of the trust, who is also the chair of governors, has remained the same. Two new governors have joined the governing board.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders, including governors, have begun to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. They have refined and improved the school improvement plan. This clearly identifies the actions that need to take place to ensure that all the areas identified in the previous inspection report are addressed. This plan contains appropriate milestones and measurable targets. Leaders have organised a calendar of activities to check that the actions have taken place.

Governors have acted with urgency to improve their knowledge and understanding of their role in school leadership. They worked with external support to undertake a review of governance. This has enabled governors' self-evaluation to be more accurate. They have undertaken training where necessary to improve their ability to ask challenging questions and hold leaders to account. They have identified skills which would strengthen the governing board and have appointed governors with appropriate expertise.

Governors formed an academy improvement board following the previous inspection. This checks meticulously that actions have been undertaken. It meets regularly to review progress and has worked with external partners to ensure that a range of evidence has been gathered to help members to reach this judgement. Leaders and governors are now looking to improve their plans further by considering in greater depth the impact of the actions that have been put in place. Governors now refer to the school's own assessment information and the monitoring activities that they undertake so that they can be sure that pupils are making the best possible progress.

Leaders commissioned a review of pupil premium and a further external report to check on the progress that had been made following the initial review. Following the initial review, leaders have ensured that all teachers have appropriately high expectations. They have improved the range of opportunities for disadvantaged pupils and ensured that parents understand the benefits of the extra-curricular activities on offer to their children. The proportion of pupils who are in receipt of the pupil premium has increased as parental awareness has grown.

Following the second review, leaders have introduced more effective monitoring of the progress of disadvantaged pupils. A senior leader is responsible for the progress of disadvantaged pupils and there is now a named governor for pupil premium who provides additional scrutiny and challenge. Leaders have ensured that teachers have higher expectations of disadvantaged pupils and that teachers identify ways in which disadvantaged pupils could be challenged further. Leaders use the school's own assessment information and check pupils' books to ensure that they do not fall behind.

Governors and leaders now understand their responsibilities to ensure that the way in which the school uses additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils improves the progress that they make and closes the gap between them and their peers. They are beginning to check that the funding is making a difference and evaluate the impact of strategies used such as additional teaching, though this is at an early stage of development.

Leaders undertake a range of monitoring activities to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have successfully checked that new methods of teaching are taking place and are beginning to check the impact of this on what pupils know and can do. This is becoming more accurate and insightful. However, not all comments that leaders make through the feedback that they give to teachers are sufficiently precise to help teachers improve their practice.

Leaders have now established a consistent system of assessment and have ensured that teachers use this to inform their planning. They have refined their assessments so that they can raise teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve. Leaders and governors are beginning to use this information to set targets

by which the impact of the school improvement plan can be measured. They have more ambitious expectations of the progress that pupils can make.

Leadership roles have been clearly defined following the previous inspection. External consultants have provided effective coaching so that leaders understand their roles and responsibilities. Leaders in early years have ensured that all staff have benefited from regular training. They have checked the difference that this has made and use this knowledge to help them to establish priorities for future training. Middle leaders have provided strong direction and support for colleagues in establishing a greater degree of consistency in teaching and learning. They are becoming more involved in evaluating the impact of this and understand the progress of different groups of pupils across the school.

Since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that they have shared the school's plans for improvement with parents. Meetings, reports and letters have kept parents well informed about the school's progress. Parents with whom inspectors met spoke of the confidence they had in leaders and the improvements that they could see in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teachers' knowledge about the teaching of comprehension skills has improved. Teachers ensure that pupils know what inference and deduction are. Pupils read frequently and are able to describe which books they choose and what interests them and why. Leaders have checked that pupils' reading books are matched to pupils' abilities. However, in some cases, younger pupils cannot read the text fluently because it contains unfamiliar sounds and irregular words which they cannot yet read. Leaders need to continue to check that all books provide appropriate opportunities for younger pupils to practise the sounds that they know and support pupils' developing comprehension.

Most pupils' writing is well presented and pupils write fluently in a range of styles. For example, pupils rewrote traditional tales with a humorous twist. Older pupils based descriptive writing on their reading of 'War Horse'. Teachers have higher expectations of the vocabulary that pupils use and a themed day where pupils came dressed as words such as 'incognito' raised the profile of this among the school community. Younger pupils make adventurous choices, such as describing the character's thoughts 'laced with dread'. Older pupils write imaginatively in different genres linked to their topic work. For example, some pupils wrote a newspaper report of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. However, teachers do not always provide them with sufficient opportunities to redraft their writing to improve the overall structure so opportunities to extend learning further for some pupils are missed.

Teachers' improved subject knowledge in mathematics enables them to anticipate the misconceptions pupils may have when they encounter new learning. Skilful questioning enables teachers to ascertain what pupils have understood. Teaching assistants are adept at making sure that they intervene appropriately to ensure that pupils are

developing the fluency that they need. Most teachers ensure that pupils have the chance to consolidate their learning if they have not understood something. In a few classes some pupils continue to make the same errors.

Teachers use assessment information to match work to pupils' next steps better. Their expectations of what pupils can do are rising and some teachers extend pupils' knowledge through additional challenge to develop their thinking. However, this is not yet consistent in all classes.

The teaching of problem-solving and reasoning is more consistent and there are many opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills. Teachers use a school-wide approach of 'DEEPER' thinking about mathematical problems – 'Draw, Explain, Evaluate, Prove, Extend, Refine' to encourage pupils to explain their reasoning. This has provided a focus for teachers and pupils to be able to identify a range of strategies that can be used when pupils are being challenged in mathematics to apply what they know. Most pupils can explain their thinking clearly and have the confidence to present their ideas using different models. However, some reasoning activities do not extend pupils' learning well. Some pupils do not yet have the fluency needed to be able to think through the problem effectively.

Effective professional development has improved teaching and learning in the early years. Teachers have created a vibrant environment with purposeful activities. Pupils explore these with enthusiasm. Adults use questioning effectively to extend pupils' thinking. For example, when children in early years were balancing bricks on a seesaw that they had made, adults helped them to consider what would happen as they added more bricks to the plank. Adults modelled speech effectively so that the children could explain their ideas clearly.

Children in the early years are keen to write about their 'Under the Sea' topic. They know that full stops, capital letters and finger spaces are important. Adults provide frequent opportunities for children to use their phonics skills to write. Teachers encourage children to explain their thinking as they develop a deeper understanding of number, so that they know that sixteen is one ten and six more. Teachers provide many ways to explore this such as through making totals of money using different coins.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Attendance is monitored rigorously. Leaders have ensured that parents understand the school's high expectations. Support is offered where needed to overcome barriers in raising pupils' attendance and leaders are able to give examples of where this has made a rapid impact on punctuality and attendance. Leaders check that this is making a difference and work with external agencies to pursue enforcement where attendance remains unacceptably low. As a result of this concerted focus, attendance has improved and persistent absence has declined. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved, though at a slower rate. There has been a

marked decline in the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils, though this remains above the national average.

Pupils conduct themselves well around school and play cooperatively together. They listen attentively to special assemblies which celebrate the work of others. They are interested in learning more about the school's developing links with France and enjoy learning a rap in French. They are attentive in class and there is little low-level disruption as they are engaged in the learning and keen to achieve.

Outcomes for pupils

The school's assessment information indicates that in early years standards are rising. Children's understanding of mathematics is well developed and children use mathematical language well to explain their thinking. For example, children used apparatus to explore a story about fish. They knew how many were left when some had swum away and could demonstrate how they knew using the equipment to model the story that they told.

Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks indicates that more pupils are building on the stronger start they get in early years to have a secure grasp of phonics. Pupils' progress in writing is improving and there are well-established routines for pupils to check and improve their spelling and punctuation. However, not all pupils have the opportunity to redraft their work to improve it further and so opportunities for pupils to make the greatest amount of progress are not always fully exploited.

Disadvantaged pupils receive support which is well targeted to help them to make better progress. Scrutiny of books indicates that almost all disadvantaged pupils are making the progress that the school expects and some disadvantaged pupils are making more than this. However, there is still a gap between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and their peers in most subjects and in most year groups.

The proportion of pupils working at greater depth by the end of key stage 1 and at the higher standard at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics increased in 2018. The school's own assessment information and the quality of work in pupils' books indicate that the majority of the most able pupils are making strong progress.

External support

Since the last inspection, governors have appointed independent external advisers to help them to improve the school. The advisers have provided mentoring for leaders and governors as well as supporting leaders' capacity to evaluate their progress in addressing areas for improvement from the previous inspection.

Leaders have also been supported by a teaching school alliance based at an outstanding primary school. The deputy headteacher from the teaching school has worked alongside leaders to review the quality of teaching and learning. This has provided leaders with useful training and helped them to moderate their judgements about the impact that teaching is having on improving outcomes for pupils.