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Mrs Leila Naldrett  
Head of Teaching and Learning  
Gatehouse Primary Academy  
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Devon  
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Dear Mrs Naldrett

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Gatehouse Primary Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 8 October 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 was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection that took place in November 2017. 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 actions towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the First Federation multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Devon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Iain Freeland  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - teachers assessing pupils' progress accurately and gaining a clear understanding of what they need to learn next
  - teachers setting consistently high expectations for what all pupils can achieve
  - providing training for teachers and teaching assistants so they can challenge and improve pupils' contributions to learning and so enable them to achieve high standards
  - improving phonics teaching across early years and Year 1 classes so that it is consistently of the highest quality.
- Secure pupils' rapid progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics across key stages 1 and 2 by:
  - raising pupils' confidence and interest in reading
  - improving pupils' writing skills, especially their spelling, punctuation and use of grammar
  - consistently developing pupils' calculation and reasoning skills in mathematics
  - ensuring that pupils are able to use these skills to develop their thinking across the curriculum.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - applying newly introduced systems for consistently checking, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching, to raise standards as quickly as possible
  - implementing new approaches to using additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and so enable these pupils to make strong progress from their starting points.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 8 October 2019**

### **Evidence**

I met with the head of teaching and learning, the chief executive officer, the director of school improvement of the First Federation Trust, the chair of the trust board and a parent representative of the 'South Hub'. I also met with curriculum leaders, the school's designated lead for safeguarding and other members of school and trust staff.

I observed pupils learning in class and reviewed their work jointly with the head of teaching and learning. The school's arrangements for safeguarding were checked. The wider concerns raised following parental complaints were considered.

### **Context**

There has been a fall in pupil numbers since the previous inspection and so the number of classes has reduced by two. A few teachers have left the school and been replaced by colleagues from other schools in the multi-academy trust. Since the monitoring inspection in October 2018, several leaders of year groups have taken up different positions within the school or in other trust schools. New leaders have been appointed. Some teachers have changed year groups.

### **The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection**

The school has made clear progress since the monitoring inspection in October 2018. Standards continue to rise and the quality of education continues to improve. This is most clearly seen in the early years. Children are thriving as a result of the well-planned activities that are set out for them. Teaching captures children's interest. The organisation of the early years classroom and activities enthuses children. They are self-motivated and can sustain their concentration for a prolonged period. Teachers and other adults work well with children to support and challenge them in their learning. Most children are confident in the initial letter sounds they have already learnt. Several are able to write the letters they know accurately. For pupils in Year 1 who do not have a strong understanding of phonics, teachers are helping them to catch up.

From Reception to Year 6, teachers now show much higher expectations about pupils' conduct and behaviour. In most classes, routines are now embedded well. This is ensuring that pupils are attentive and ready to learn.

In some subjects, such as mathematics, learning has been carefully planned so that pupils can see how one aspect leads to another that is more complex. Teachers ensure that pupils are secure in their understanding before pupils move on. However, some teachers lack the depth of subject knowledge they need to ensure

that pupils excel. In other subjects, progress towards developing the curriculum is at a much earlier stage. Staff have had relatively little training beyond English and mathematics. Consequently, teachers' planning is not matched well to what pupils already know. Frequently, teachers try to include too much new learning in their plans.

Teachers are regularly checking what pupils know and understand. However, leaders have not ensured that teachers use the information this provides to adapt or modify their teaching. Consequently, pupils lose concentration and so behaviour begins to deteriorate. Too often, errors go unchecked. For pupils who have missed lessons, there are gaps in their knowledge as they do not routinely catch up.

Leaders have concentrated much of their efforts on pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation. This was an area of weakness identified at the inspection in November 2017. Leaders have had some success. However, the lack of a cohesive strategy for improving pupils' confidence and interest in reading and learning new vocabulary is limiting the progress in this area.

The school's special education needs coordinator (SENCo), supported by one of the trust's SEN leaders, has accurately assessed pupils who have additional needs. They have involved specialists and sought diagnoses. Consequently, the needs of pupils are very clearly identified. They have developed strategies for teaching staff to use in their lessons, provided training and used funding wisely in buying resources.

Although pupils' needs are clearly identified, teaching staff do not plan learning well enough to meet these pupils needs. The quality of support for pupils with SEND in classes is variable.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Leaders are accurate in their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have made many of the cultural changes to the organisation of the school that were necessary. They have worked with staff to agree the educational entitlement for a pupil at the school. The school knows its community well and has shaped a curriculum to support pupils in both their academic achievement and personal, social, health and economic education. Teaching staff are embracing what training they receive to strengthen the quality of education.

School leaders are now less reliant on support from external consultants and senior leaders from the trust.

In recent months, senior leaders have begun to appoint subject leaders. It is early days and those colleagues who have been appointed are developing their own subject knowledge to be able to lead school-wide development. Most curriculum leaders are, therefore, not yet able to provide teaching staff with the guidance they

need. Across subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough and leaders are developing plans to address this.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- In the early years, staff plan learning and challenge pupils about their learning effectively. Consequently, children make strong progress when they start in the Reception class.
- Across the school, leaders have been successful in raising teachers' expectations about what pupils should know, understand and can do. There is a clear ambition for pupils to have the academic knowledge and good-quality personal and social development they need.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The school's strategy to develop pupils' reading skills lacks cohesion. The pace of change is too slow.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils with SEND receive the support they need.

### **External support**

The school makes use of relatively little external support. Currently, English leaders are working with the local authority's partner organisation to develop a common approach to the teaching of reading in the school. Mathematics leaders are working with the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics. In both English and mathematics, this is effectively developing leaders' subject knowledge.

Internal support, provided by the multi-academy trust, has reduced but continues to be effective. For example, the trust's 'Hub SENCo' is now providing very specific, helpful support to the school's SENCo when expertise is required.