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Mrs Helen Okrafo-Smart
Interim Headteacher
Linchfield Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Okrafo-Smart

Special measures monitoring inspection of Linchfield Community Primary School

Following my visit with Heidi Maliff, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 November 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 most 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 January 2019.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may 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 Lincolnshire. This

letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steve Varnam
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2019

- Urgently address the weaknesses in the school's safeguarding systems by ensuring that:
 - the arrangements for safeguarding and safer recruitment meet statutory requirements
 - the designated safeguarding leader maintains full and accurate records of safeguarding concerns
 - governors hold leaders to account for the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding and safer recruitment arrangements.
- Improve the impact of leadership and governance by:
 - evaluating the impact of funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils to ensure that this funding is used effectively in order to raise standards for these pupils
 - supporting middle leaders to enable them to bring about improvements to their areas of responsibility
 - creating an environment in which staff feel well supported, respected and treated fairly.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that the assessment of pupils throughout the school is based on thorough evidence of pupils' achievements and is used effectively to plan pupils' next steps in learning
 - developing pupils' skills in mathematics and providing opportunities for them to explain and reason
 - providing opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing skills
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are ambitious and appropriate to pupils' abilities, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of pupils' handwriting and standards of presentation.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by developing pupils' resilience to become successful learners.
- Improve the quality of education in the early years by ensuring that the setting meets statutory requirements for safeguarding and the early years curriculum.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 November 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and met with the interim headteacher, acting deputy headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the leader responsible for the use of the pupil premium, the designated leaders for safeguarding, the leaders responsible for English and mathematics, the early years leader, the members of the interim executive board, two representatives of the local authority, two representatives of the Community Inclusive Trust (CIT), a group of staff, lunchtime supervisors and office staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils from Years 5 and 6. They spoke informally to groups of parents and carers at the end of the school day. Inspectors visited lessons in all key stages. They scrutinised pupils' work across a range of subjects. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents relating to safeguarding and school improvement. They considered the local authority's statement of action, the school improvement plan and the external review of the effectiveness of the pupil premium funding.

Context

There has been significant turbulence in staffing since the previous inspection. The headteacher has been absent from the school since June 2019. The local authority appointed an interim headteacher in the same month. The deputy headteacher is currently absent from school. This role is being covered by two acting deputy headteachers.

Six teaching staff left the school at the end of the last academic year. Five new teachers joined the school in September 2019. Supply teachers currently teach two classes, due to staffing absence. The number of pupils on roll has fallen since the previous inspection but it has recently begun to increase.

The school's governing body was disbanded in April 2019 and replaced by an interim executive board. This board consists of three members, selected by the local authority.

The school is subject to a direct academy order and it is planned to convert the school to an academy. The school is currently receiving support from the local authority and CIT.

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

The interim headteacher and members of the interim executive board are a driving force for improvement. They have made a strong start to tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding is now effective. They have spent considerable time improving the security of the school site. Risk assessments of pupils' safety, while in school, are clear and well-communicated. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and able to recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm or abuse. Staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They know who to report their concerns to and how to record these accurately, using the school's online reporting system.

The designated leader and deputy leaders for safeguarding are an effective team. They know pupils and families well. They act on concerns raised by staff, pupils and parents quickly. They make timely referrals to external agencies so that pupils and families get the help they need quickly. Leaders ensure that records of safeguarding concerns are reviewed regularly. Actions to keep pupils safe are checked and followed up. Leaders are tenacious when seeking the right support for families. Pupils overwhelmingly agree that they feel safe in school. They can identify an appropriate member of staff to share any worries with.

The members of the interim executive board hold leaders to account well. They regularly visit the school to check safeguarding procedures. They have scrutinised and checked safeguarding policies and practices. They ensure that employees, volunteers and visitors' suitability to work with children is checked, in line with statutory requirements.

Senior leaders have supported staff professionally and gained their trust. Staff morale is improving. They typically comment about the positive changes they have seen since the appointment of the interim headteacher. They say their work environment is free from bullying and harassment.

Leaders have worked hard to improve the curriculum for mathematics. Teachers plan and deliver lessons that are increasingly well-sequenced. Pupils' work shows that their knowledge and understanding are improving over time. Some pupils can remember and recall the knowledge they have been taught. They use this to help them to solve problems, and they can talk about how they worked out the answers.

The newly appointed early years leader has made a promising start. She has a high ambition for all children. The quality of education in the Nursery and Reception classes is improving. The curriculum and learning environment have been redesigned. Staff ensure that the work children complete is demanding. This is particularly evident in reading and writing. More children can write simple words and phrases using their early phonics knowledge than was previously the case.

Pupils are showing more pride in their work. Evidence from pupils' workbooks shows that pupils' handwriting and presentation are steadily improving. Pupils recognise that their work is getting better. They say that work is becoming more challenging. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors say they feel 'ready for this challenge' and that they 'want to do better'.

The quality of education in most subjects is steadily improving. However, leaders are having less impact on pupils' achievement in writing. There are still too many pupils who need to catch up. The curriculum in this subject is not ambitious enough. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. For example, some older pupils are still working on simple punctuation, such as the use of capital letters and full stops.

The SENCo has worked with determination to ensure that the school meets the statutory requirements of the special educational needs code of practice. Pupils with SEND are now accurately identified. They have appropriate plans and targets in place to support their development. The SENCo has not yet had time to check that teachers are implementing these plans successfully. Some pupils with SEND do not get the support they need in the classroom to catch up and keep up with their peers.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium funding has been completed. Leaders have begun to implement some of the recommendations, but it is too early to see the impact of their work.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher, interim executive board and CIT are a cohesive team. There is a shared sense of responsibility for the school and its pupils. The interim executive board has directed the work of CIT to ensure that support meets the school's needs and is effective. Leaders and teachers have received good-quality training and coaching to improve their leadership and teaching skills.

The interim executive board is highly effective. Members have a wide and varied skill set. They use this to hold leaders to account effectively. They monitor the school improvement plan and check the effectiveness of leaders' actions regularly. They are quick to challenge leaders when the impact of their actions falls below expectations. This is resulting in timely and effective improvements.

The SENCo and the leaders of mathematics and early years have received good support. They understand what is working well and what needs to improve in their areas of responsibility. They have the knowledge and skills needed to continue to improve the quality of education.

Leaders have made a good start to developing a coherently planned and well-sequenced curriculum in most subjects. They have mapped out the knowledge and skills they want pupils to gain in these subjects and by when. Teachers are starting to use this planning to inform their teaching. For example, pupils in Year 6 learn about the key events that triggered the First World War before applying this knowledge to their study of the Second World War.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have established a culture of support and accountability throughout the staff team. They provide effective professional development for staff. They give useful feedback which helps staff to improve their practice. Leaders ensure that staff at all levels understand the actions needed to improve the school. Leaders and staff work well together to increase the expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Middle leaders receive the support they need to lead improvements within their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders value their contributions to school improvement.
- Leaders have worked hard to gain the trust and respect of pupils and parents and carers. They recognise the work that leaders have undertaken to address the areas needing improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders' engagement with stakeholders has been highly effective.
- Leaders prioritise their actions and tackle areas for improvement in a timely manner. They manage change well. Leaders are improving the school without increasing burdens on staff workload.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have not developed an ambitious writing curriculum. Too many pupils do not acquire the writing skills needed to be successful in the next stage of their education.
- Leaders do not know if their actions to improve the quality of education that pupils with SEND and the most disadvantaged pupils receive is having a positive impact on their achievement, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.

External support

The local authority has ensured that there is an effective package of support to improve the school. The appointments of the interim headteacher and interim executive board have been pivotal to the improvements made. The brokering of support from CIT has enhanced the capacity for further improvement.