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20 November 2019

Mrs Sarah Martin  
Interim Headteacher  
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East Grinstead  
West Sussex  
RH19 3JL

Dear Mrs Martin

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Blackwell Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 12–13 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 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 June 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 not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in June 2019.**

- Ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are effective, by:
  - undertaking regular training for staff so that they have a deeper understanding of their statutory duties to ensure that pupils are kept safe, including on the playground
  - urgently ensuring that staff have a good knowledge of children's welfare arrangements in the early years and that the environment is made safe
  - reviewing the role and responsibilities of the designated safeguarding lead
  - ensuring that the single central record is kept up to date.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and governance, including in the early years, by ensuring that:
  - a sustainable and effective leadership and staff structure is in place
  - governors have a clear understanding of the school's priorities and provide robust support and challenge to leaders to enable rapid improvement
  - effective monitoring of teaching takes place to improve teaching and raise standards
  - the skills of subject leaders, teachers and support staff are developed so that they can contribute fully to raising standards in all subjects
  - the curriculum engages pupils in a well-thought-through range of learning across all subjects
  - additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively so that it makes a positive impact on outcomes for this group of pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, and the most able, make strong progress, by ensuring that:
  - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve in a wide range of subjects
  - assessment of pupils' learning is reliably accurate
  - assessment information is used to address gaps in pupils' learning, so that tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities
  - pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are provided with consistently effective support to enable them to make good progress from their starting points
  - children in early years are provided with learning opportunities that interest

them and extend their learning

- staff, including those in early years, are suitably trained to develop their skills and subject knowledge.

■ Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by ensuring that:

- an effective behaviour policy is implemented that is understood by staff and pupils
- there is a reduction in the number of incidents of bullying and poor behaviour
- leaders rigorously track and monitor pupils' attendance to reduce the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND who are absent or persistently absent from school
- fluctuations to staffing reduce so that pupils' social and emotional needs are well understood.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 November 2019 to 13 November 2019**

### **Evidence**

Together with senior leaders, I made short visits to some classrooms to look at pupils' learning and their behaviour. I observed behaviour at break- and lunchtime. I met with small groups of pupils to discuss their experiences at school and review their work across a range of subjects. I held meetings with the interim headteacher, senior and middle leaders and non-teaching staff. I also met with the chair and vice-chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. I spoke to several parents before and after school to gather their views of how the school has changed since the previous inspection.

I reviewed a range of documents, including safeguarding records, policies and improvement plans. I also reviewed records of pupils' attendance and behaviour. I considered records of governors' meetings.

### **Context**

Some changes have been made to the leadership of the school. The headteacher has left the school. An interim headteacher has been appointed from a local school in the Partners in Learning Academy Trust. The deputy headteacher has returned to her post at the school. The leader who was acting headteacher at the previous inspection has been appointed assistant headteacher. One of the Reception Year teachers has been made leader of the early years foundation stage (EYFS). A team leader for the mid-day supervisors has been appointed. The governing body assembled during the summer term has appointed a new chair and vice-chair of governors.

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

The interim headteacher acted swiftly to stabilise the school when she started in September. She has gained the confidence of pupils, parents and carers, and staff, who appreciate the clarity of her leadership. The interim headteacher is ably supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers. This senior team provides the capacity for effective leadership, which was missing at the time of the previous inspection. Staff morale is high, and pupils are happier.

The leadership of safeguarding has been significantly improved. Designated safeguarding leaders and other staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Leaders make sure that staff have regular training and have opportunities to discuss safeguarding scenarios. Staff know pupils well enough to identify any concerns,

which they report to leaders quickly. Records of concerns about pupils are recorded thoroughly and securely. The designated safeguarding leads act promptly when there are concerns about pupils' welfare. They refer cases to the local authority's children's services when necessary. Safeguarding leaders work effectively with families to help them access support from other agencies. Leaders make sure that pupils gain an awareness of how to stay safe, including when using the internet. Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe and know whom to talk to if they have any worries.

At the start of the autumn term, the whole school community was involved in choosing four core values. These are responsibility, respect, compassion and courage. They underpin many of the rapid improvements that have taken place. Pupils are keen to demonstrate these values in class and in their behaviour around the school. Pupils are proud when they are recognised for showing these values during lessons and at playtime.

The core values lie at the heart of the new behaviour policy. All staff were consulted during the development of this policy. This means that teachers, teaching assistants, mid-day supervisors and other non-teaching staff understand the policy and can apply it consistently. If pupils' behaviour falls short of expectations, staff usually respond to the pupils by using phrases that are based on the core values. This has led to improvements in pupils' behaviour. The atmosphere around the school is calm and purposeful.

Playground behaviour has also improved due to better supervision and more structured activities. The leader of the mid-day supervisors makes sure they are better informed about individual pupils who may need watching. Communication throughout the school has improved.

As the pupils have become more settled and readier to learn, leaders have focused their attention on improving the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Middle leaders have found training by external advisers is helping them to revise the current curriculum. However, there is much to do to ensure that curriculum plans show how pupils' learning will be sequenced over time. This applies to the plans for reading throughout the school, as well as for science and foundation subjects.

Leaders hold regular meetings with teachers to check how well pupils in their classes are progressing. These reviews are helping teachers to understand their pupils' learning needs better. Other staff, including the special educational needs coordinator, offer suggestions to improve individual pupils' learning. Leaders follow up these meetings by checking that teachers have carried out the agreed actions and what difference they have made to the pupils. This is part of the greater accountability introduced by the interim headteacher.

Despite these improvements, the quality of teaching remains too variable. Often, lessons include interesting activities that pupils complete willingly. However, pupils

do not remember what they have learned well enough. This is because teachers do not plan precisely to build on what pupils already know. Sometimes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils should achieve.

Leaders are checking how well teaching meets the needs of pupils with SEND. There is a greater emphasis on providing support for pupils during lessons. Pupils explained how teaching assistants had helped them learn by supporting and challenging them. The attendance of some disadvantaged pupils with SEND has improved.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding has taken place. Leaders have used the recommendations to improve the pupil premium strategy. There is a sharper analysis of the barriers that contribute to the underachievement of disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are prioritised in the regular pupil progress meetings. However, it is too soon for these actions to make a significant difference to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Unless weaknesses in teaching are tackled, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND will remain too low.

There have been considerable improvements to the quality of the environment and teaching in Reception Year. The new leader for the EYFS has been well supported by a specialist adviser from the local authority. The area is now safe and better organised, and children's well-being is prioritised. Lesson planning responds to children's interests and children are engaged and enthused. Children now see the outside area as a place of learning as well as play. Nevertheless, there is more to do to ensure that all children develop and learn as well as possible.

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

The interim headteacher acted decisively and with a clear vision. Her communication with the whole community has been highly appreciated. Staff across the school told the inspector how much they feel valued by the interim headteacher. She involved all staff, pupils and parents in shaping some of the significant changes made at the start of term. Despite the fact that some changes required extra work, staff said they feel more fulfilled as they can see the difference they are making. Staff also feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

Parents who spoke to the inspector all praised the leadership of the interim headteacher and the improvements at the school. Parents also appreciate the extra leadership capacity brought by the deputy and assistant headteachers. Parents of children in early years were generally delighted with the start their children had made to school. Despite an overall positive response by parents, a few have lingering concerns about their children's progress and/or well-being.

Staff turnover has slowed, and staffing is stable, except in one class, where there is supply teaching for half the week.

The governing body was newly formed during the summer term, at the time of the previous inspection. The chair and other governors bring educational expertise. The governing body's priority was to focus on safeguarding, but governors have also brought an urgency to improving teaching and outcomes for pupils. Governors are providing effective support and robust challenge to school leaders. Several visits have taken place for governors to see for themselves the impact of actions taken by leaders.

Governors and school leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's improvement plans have clear strategies to bring about improvements and are suitably ambitious. New monitoring systems are being introduced to help leaders hold staff to account more effectively.

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

- The capable senior leadership team, together with a high-quality governing body, have made a strong start to securing improvement. Effective support from the executive principal of Partners in Learning Trust and advisers from the local authority have also played an important part.
- Leaders have focused on the right areas. Safeguarding systems are now much more rigorous, pupils' behaviour is calmer, the early years provision is safer and better organised, and the process of improving the quality of education has started.
- The ethos of the school is being transformed by adopting the core values. The interim headteacher skilfully included all of the stakeholders in choosing the values. This has led to a consistent approach to behaviour and attitudes for learning. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour have reduced.
- Leaders have improved communication both within the school and the local community. Parents and staff praise the more harmonious atmosphere.

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

- The school's plans for curriculum development need to be implemented. Subject leadership needs to be strengthened. Staff need training to develop their knowledge and expertise in teaching different subjects.
- Teachers do not routinely use assessment effectively to help pupils remember long term what they have been taught. Teachers need to ensure that they check pupils' knowledge and understanding systematically and identify and tackle misconceptions and gaps in knowledge before moving on.
- Teachers do not show consistently high expectations for pupils' achievement.

## **External support**

The local authority acted quickly in response to the concerns identified at the last inspection by commissioning Partners in Learning Academy Trust to provide an experienced interim headteacher. Additional leadership support is provided by the Partners in Learning executive principal.

The local authority is committed to supporting the school until it becomes an academy. The link adviser visits regularly, monitors the actions taken by leaders and evaluates progress against the post-inspection action plan. An associate adviser for early years has provided beneficial coaching for the new EYFS leader and her team. Other officers from the local authority have provided support for governance and finance.

The local authority's package of support includes training for leaders on improving the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning.

The external support provided so far has been effective.