

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



5 December 2019

Christine Smith
Benedict Primary School
Church Road
Mitcham
Surrey
CR4 3BE

Dear Ms Smith

Special measures monitoring inspection of Benedict Primary School

Following my visit with Carolyn Dickinson, Her Majesty's Inspector and Jason Hughes, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 19–20 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 March 2019.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not 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 and the chief executive

officer, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Merton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Moon

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:

- Senior, phase and subject leaders make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- Middle leaders have greater impact on the achievement of pupils across the school
- Teachers receive the professional development they need to strengthen teaching and improve pupils' outcomes, particularly in reading and writing
- Governors rigorously monitor the impact of the pupil premium funding on the progress of disadvantaged pupils
- Provision for pupils with SEND is reviewed to ensure that the identification of their needs is accurate and that teaching helps them to make good progress.

Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:

- Teachers pitch activities and tasks which consistently meet pupils' differing needs and help them to make good progress across the curriculum
- Teaching in key stage 1 builds swiftly on the good progress children make in the early years.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken, in order to assess how the use of this funding may be improved.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 19 November 2019 to 20 November 2019

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke to parents bringing their children to school and took account of the school's own parent survey. Inspectors met with governors and the chief executive officer of the board of trustees.

Inspectors visited lessons accompanied at times by leaders. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' written work from different year groups. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at break and lunchtimes.

Context

The school serves an area of high deprivation. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is very high, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium.

Since the school was judged to require special measures in March 2019, there has been a period of significant turbulence. There has been a high turnover of teaching staff and a further fall in pupil numbers. The school is seeking a new academy sponsor. At the time of this monitoring visit, no firm decision had been made regarding the re-brokering arrangements.

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

Senior leaders do not have the information they need to make accurate judgements about the quality of education. Senior, phase and subject leaders carry out regular checks on the quality of education. Their weekly schedule includes visits to lessons and scrutinising pupils' work, both in books and on display. These activities are not rigorous enough, because leaders do not describe what needs to happen next so that things can improve.

Subject leaders have recently produced statements describing the arrangements for their respective subjects. However, these are not joined up to create an overall framework for the school's curriculum.

Outcomes for 2019 show improvement across all key stages and particularly progress in reading by the end of Year 6. However, in many subjects pupils are not acquiring knowledge and skills in a steady manner. As they become older, pupils do not always build on what they have learned before. Leaders told inspectors of instances where teachers are having to plug gaps in pupils' knowledge, for example

in mathematics. Pupils in the early years and in Years 1 and 2 do not have a secure enough knowledge of letters and sounds to read words with accuracy, fluency and confidence. Reading books do not consistently match the pupils' reading stage. Some reading records are incomplete. They are not helpful in communicating with parents and carers about their child's reading ability and next steps.

Leaders' work to improve the support for pupils who have SEND has resulted in a clearer identification of their learning needs. Leaders monitor the provision but do not focus precisely enough on what pupils should be able to do following an intervention.

The strengths identified at the time of the last inspection continue. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps children settle in well and acquire the good early learning habits of listening, sharing and taking turns. Pupils who spoke to inspectors were positive about their school and the opportunities they have. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities for work experience in the office, in the dining room and in early years.

Overall attendance remains just below the national average and has remained stable for two years.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Significant turbulence in staffing combined with uncertainty surrounding the school's future have had a detrimental impact on leaders' ability to secure rapid improvement. Leaders' improvement work has been further hampered, because their plan is not fit for purpose. Identification of the reasons behind weaknesses is not precise enough and the success criteria are not sharp enough. Leaders have implemented a programme of professional development, drawing on the support of local providers and addressing some of the identified weaknesses. It is too early to assess the impact of this aspect of their work.

Governors are clear about their role in supporting and challenging leaders to secure improvement. However, the review of governance recommended at the time of the section 5 inspection has not yet happened. This is because governors have been pre-occupied with the process of re-brokering. As a result, they are still not holding leaders sufficiently well to account for the quality of education pupils receive.

The external review of pupil premium funding has only recently happened. Governors have not yet considered the findings and recommendations. Inaccuracies regarding funding allocations were rectified during the inspection. Delays in the review and anomalies in the published information raise further concerns about governors' monitoring role.

Safeguarding is effective. Leaders have a deep understanding of the safeguarding needs and concerns of the school community. They keep detailed records and are

swift to follow up any unresolved issues. They make sure that staff and governor training is relevant and of good quality. Parents who spoke to inspectors are positive about the school. They feel able to raise concerns with leaders.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Staff are keen to support leaders in their endeavours to improve the quality of education in the school.
- Leaders are willing to reach out for support from other local providers who have experience of securing improvement.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The school improvement plan is too broad. The identification of weaknesses is not precise enough and the success criteria are not sharp enough to secure the rapid improvement needed.
- There is still uncertainty about the future of the school. While a potential sponsor has been very recently identified, no date has been set for when the school will be re-brokered.

External support

The support provided by the trust has helped leaders to begin the process of improvement. However, the trust does not have the capacity to provide the range of support and guidance needed.

- School leaders and governors should revise the statement of action and the school improvement plan, so that they reflect the recommendations made by Ofsted in July 2019.