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18 December 2019

Joanna White  
Dinnington Community Primary School  
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Dear Miss White

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Dinnington Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 4–5 December 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 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Rotherham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Ralph

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Urgently improve safeguarding arrangements by continuing to:
  - ensure that all staff receive planned training in essential aspects of safeguarding
  - make sure that the accountability of school leaders, members of the interim board and trust leaders in relation to safeguarding is explicit and that stringent checks on the arrangements in place are made
  - make sure that pupils with specific needs have appropriate plans in place to address their medical needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - strengthening improvement plans, making actions to be taken precise so that everyone understands what is expected of them and those responsible for governance can check on the difference leaders are making to pupils' progress and attainment
  - developing the roles of new middle leaders in planning progression in their subjects, directing improvements in teaching and learning and checking the progress that pupils are making
  - improving provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) by gaining a better understanding of their needs and barriers to learning and how these can successfully be addressed by the delivery of high-quality teaching
  - raising everyone's expectations of pupils' attendance and responding rapidly when pupils miss school.
- Improve pupils' outcomes in reading by:
  - ensuring consistency in the teaching of phonics, using high-quality adult modelling in saying and writing sounds
  - making sure that pupils have reading books that are well matched to the sounds they know or are learning
  - giving pupils, particularly those with lower-than-typical starting points or who have fallen behind, frequent opportunities to read aloud
  - engaging pupils and their families in the pleasure that books can bring, creating opportunities for them to read widely and often.
- Improve the progress that children make through the early years by:
  - improving the quality of provision for two-year-olds
  - providing many opportunities for children to apply their early reading, writing

and mathematical skills in independent activities

- using clear assessment procedures to check children’s progress and plan the next steps that they need to take across the whole foundation stage curriculum
  - ensuring that planning and teaching address the different needs of all pupils, particularly the most able, those with lower starting points and boys.
- Improve teaching and learning to ensure that a higher proportion of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND, are well prepared for the next stage of their education by:
- ensuring that all teachers and support staff are fully equipped to support pupils with different needs and with different starting points
  - ensuring consistency, challenge and high expectations of what pupils can achieve academically and behaviourally.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 4 December 2019 to 5 December 2019**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the deputy SENCo. The inspector also met the English and phonics leaders, the safeguarding leader and the member of staff who maintains recruitment records.

The inspector met the chair of the board of trustees, one of the directors, the chair of the academy interim board (AIB) and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the multi-academy trust. The inspector also met groups of pupils, parents and staff.

Inspectors judged safeguarding to be ineffective at the time of the last inspection. Leaders were given this as the first urgent area for improvement. For this reason, safeguarding was identified as the main focus for this monitoring visit.

### **Context**

Following the last inspection, several trustees resigned. Three new directors joined the board of trustees. Trustees disbanded the interim executive board and formed a new AIB.

The chief finance officer for the multi-academy trust was acting temporarily as the interim CEO at the time of the last inspection. The new CEO started in July 2019.

Governors appointed several new senior staff, who began in September 2019, including the deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers, a new SENCo and a deputy SENCo.

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

Leaders are making better progress in some areas for improvement than others. Leaders were right to prioritise safeguarding, improving the teaching of reading and improving provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

### **Safeguarding**

Leaders have ensured that individual healthcare plans address the needs of pupils with medical needs and/or disabilities. The recently appointed SENCo and deputy SENCo worked well together to achieve this. They started afresh, checking with parents to make sure that they knew about every pupil with additional medical

needs. Leaders followed the statutory guidance, 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions', to make sure that they included all the necessary information in individual healthcare plans.

Leaders make reasonable adjustments to ensure the dignity of pupils requiring medical intervention or intimate care in school. There is an inclusive culture where all pupils with physical disabilities or specific medical needs are given full access to the whole curriculum, including residential visits and swimming lessons. There are personal evacuation plans for pupils who need them. Leaders have given care and attention to every detail.

Leaders make sure that pupils who are absent from school without notification are safe. If staff cannot get an answer from parents or carers by telephone, the inclusion leader makes a home visit. The inclusion leader has established good relationships with parents, and they appreciate the support that she provides to their children and families.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have caught up on essential safeguarding training. Staff have all read the latest safeguarding guidance documents. All staff have had lots of face-to-face and online training. Staff are confident about how to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Teachers and teaching assistants know that in their local community pupils may be at risk of criminal exploitation. They are aware of the signs that this may be happening and are extra vigilant to check that pupils are safe. Leaders share information with the secondary school when they have safeguarding concerns about ex-pupils.

Leaders have been less successful in training the staff who are responsible for maintaining and overseeing the records of recruitment checks. They do not understand well enough why each separate check is so important. One check that should have been made was completed during the course of this monitoring visit. It is leaders' responsibility to make sure that staff have the necessary understanding to enable them to carry out responsibilities that have been delegated to them.

Governors have relied too heavily on information provided by an external safeguarding consultant. When the AIB met in November, the CEO suggested getting another external safeguarding audit to check the progress leaders are making. Additional checks should have been made sooner.

## **Quality of education**

The new SENCo and deputy SENCo are passionate about ensuring that the individual needs of pupils with SEND are met. They have assessed each pupil's special educational needs against local authority thresholds, to make sure that each pupil is getting the help they need. The SENCo has updated the register of pupils with SEND, including one-page profiles for each child. Leaders carefully check the progress that these pupils are making. Specialist teachers from the local authority

have trained all staff. There is a clear cycle of assess, plan and review. For some pupils, leaders are gathering the necessary evidence to support requests for statutory assessment.

Leaders have identified that some pupils have social, emotional and mental health needs. These pupils are supported in different therapy groups, such as 'time to talk' or 'good to be me'. Teachers know the 'trigger points' that make some pupils angry. They avoid these triggers and help pupils to calm down instead. As a result, pupils have fewer violent outbursts. The rate of exclusions has reduced.

The quality of education is not good enough. This affects all pupils' learning, but it affects pupils with SEND even more because they are already struggling. Leaders are working hard to try to improve the quality of education so that it is consistently good. They know that this will help all pupils reach the standards they should and stop pupils with SEND from falling further behind.

Leaders prioritised improving the teaching of early reading and phonics first. Specialist teachers from a local English hub have trained all staff. Leaders have introduced new phonics resources. Teachers know exactly which sounds pupils need to have learned at the end of each term. They are making sure that pupils are keeping up. Leaders have purchased lots of new reading books. They have reorganised all the other reading books to make sure that they are matched closely to the letters and sounds that pupils know. There are enough books for everyone. Now that pupils can read their books, they are enjoying reading more. On the second day of this monitoring visit, lots of parents were in classrooms enjoying reading with their child. This happens every week.

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

The chair of the AIB was appointed in July 2019, but leaders have not yet undertaken an enhanced criminal record check in line with statutory requirements. In advance of this inspection, the scheme of delegation was not published on the website in line with statutory guidance and the Academies Financial Handbook. The CEO arranged for the scheme of delegation to be published on the second day of the monitoring visit. Trustees' arrangements for monitoring legal compliance checks are not sharp enough.

Trustees appointed the new chair of the AIB because of his strategic skills and experience. He was previously a director of children's services before leading a large multi-academy trust. Under his leadership, the AIB is challenging leaders appropriately.

The headteacher's evaluation of the quality of education is accurate. The school's improvement plan is much stronger now. Leaders have made sure that actions are precise. The plans are regularly reviewed and actions highlighted to show how much progress leaders have made. Governors ask probing questions to challenge

leaders about the rate of progress. Governors proactively seek other checks. For example, they recently commissioned a national leader of education to provide a fresh perspective on the school's strengths and areas for development.

Staff morale remains high. Teachers say, 'We're all pulling together.' Leaders are reasonable in their expectations and their management of teachers' workload. Leaders have reduced the amount of detail teachers must record in their planning. Teachers appreciate this. Leaders are fair and push deadlines back when there are competing pressures on teachers' time. Newly qualified teachers get the support and additional training that they need.

Leaders understand and respect their tight-knit, local community. Parents appreciate this.

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

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked together previously, so there is trust and confidence between them. They work well together as a team and they share the same vision and ethos. They have quickly established an effective leadership partnership and the rate of improvement has increased since September 2019.
- The interim CEO had a finance background. The new CEO has a school improvement background. She plans to ensure that the 13 schools within the multi-academy trust work more closely together so that best practice can be shared.

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

- In June 2019, the statement of action did not have any financial resources allocated to the identified priorities. This is still the case. We are now in the third quarter of the financial year. Trustees should allocate adequate funds to improve the learning environment in early years.
- The headteacher does not monitor the single central record closely enough. Oversight of these important checks needs to be secured at a senior leadership level until other staff are suitably trained and competent to do so.
- Several staff continue to be absent long term. This is slowing the rate of sustainable improvement in relation to the quality of education. The delay in recruiting an early years leader is slowing the rate of improvement leaders can make within early years.



## **External support**

The English hub has provided effective support to improve the teaching of early reading and phonics. This has improved teachers' knowledge and skills in how to teach children to read accurately and fluently.

Specialist staff from the local authority learning support services have provided effective support to improve provision for pupils with SEND. They have trained staff in specific areas, for example in autism spectrum disorder, and have led more general training to help teachers correctly identify pupils' learning needs. They have also trained staff on the code of practice, so staff now understand their legal responsibilities for pupils with SEND.

Governors have commissioned several external consultants to support leaders and provide external reports to governors, including an early years consultant. The impact of this work has been limited because there is no early years leader within the school. Governors plan to recruit a new early years leader for the summer term 2020. There are some improvements within early years, but it is not improving quickly enough.

Governors have relied too heavily on external advice about safeguarding. When the AIB met in November 2019, the CEO suggested getting another external audit to check the progress leaders are making. Checks should have been made sooner.