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Mrs Judy Wood
Old Bank Junior Infant and Nursery School
Taylor Hall Lane
Mirfield
West Yorkshire
WF14 0HW

Dear Mrs Wood

Special measures monitoring inspection of Old Bank Junior Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 11–12 March 2020, 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 not 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 Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Manuel

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently, improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - rapidly improving the quality of teaching, so pupils make strong progress
 - establishing tightly focused improvement plans with clear lines of accountability to address the school's weaknesses
 - ensuring that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements and ensure the welfare of all pupils
 - improving governors' support and challenge to leaders, particularly in relation to pupils' outcomes and the use of additional funding
 - providing a broad and rich curriculum that enables pupils to develop secure knowledge and skills in all subjects
 - ensuring that leaders and governors monitor the effectiveness of the pupil premium funding stringently, so that disadvantaged pupils make at least good progress
 - establishing effective leadership of English and mathematics, so that there is capacity to bring the required improvements in these subjects
 - providing training for teachers and performance management approaches to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Rapidly improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - providing structured, systematic phonics teaching which is well matched to pupils' needs
 - improving the teaching of reading, so that pupils' vocabulary is widened and their comprehension of the meaning of texts increases
 - ensuring that grammar, punctuation and spelling, along with the key features of different types of writing, are taught effectively
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their fluency and problem-solving in mathematics, so that more pupils deepen their learning
 - ensuring that staff set high expectations for the presentation of pupils' work and what pupils can achieve
 - using assessment accurately, so that teachers plan effectively from pupils' starting points.
- Quickly improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - accelerating the progress that pupils make, so they catch up from their low starting points

- increasing the proportion of pupils who attain the expected and high standards in reading, writing and mathematics, so that progress is at least in line with national averages.
- Promptly improve pupils’ personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - implementing behaviour strategies effectively, so that any disruptive behaviour is dealt with quickly
 - supporting pupils at risk of exclusion and those returning from exclusion effectively
 - developing procedures to address incidents of bullying and pupils’ understanding of bullying through a well-planned curriculum.
- Rapidly improve the effectiveness of early years provision by:
 - ensuring that the provision for children in early years meets all requirements and pupils are safe
 - ensuring that leaders have an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses of the provision and use this to inform the planning of the next steps of learning for children
 - improving assessment of children’s learning in all key areas
 - ensuring that teaching challenges all children to make strong progress, especially in their reading, writing and mathematics development
 - making expectations of behaviour clear to children, so they can thrive and succeed in learning.

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

An external review of the school’s use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 11 March 2020 to 12 March 2020

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you as the acting headteacher, other acting senior leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, groups of pupils, parents, governors, including the chair of the governing body, two representatives from the local authority and two representatives from the Impact Education multi-academy trust, including the chief executive officer (CEO). I observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes. I looked at pupils' work.

Context

There has been significant instability and staff absence since the previous inspection. Senior leaders have changed. A new acting headteacher and acting assistant headteacher from the Impact Education multi-academy trust started in January 2020. A business manager was appointed in January 2020. Following staff resignations, the acting assistant headteacher is now the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). A key stage 2 leader was seconded to the school in November 2019. Two teachers started in September 2019 and others left.

An academy order is in place. The school is due to join the Impact Education multi-academy trust on 1 April 2020.

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

Since taking up post in January 2020, you and the acting assistant headteacher have worked with considerable moral purpose. Together with the seconded key stage 2 leader, you are making a positive difference for staff and pupils in several areas. You have made swift progress against areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection relating to safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.

You ensure that the safety of pupils and staff is prioritised and managed well. Rules and expectations are now clear. Safeguarding training has taken place. Staff know and understand their duties to protect pupils from harm. Statutory policies, including those for behaviour and safeguarding, have been put in place and followed in practice. Checks made on adults working with pupils are now thorough. Systems for recording and managing concerns are detailed and stored chronologically. You and other leaders are working well with other professionals and experts to get vulnerable pupils and families the help they need, promptly.

These positive changes, though rapid, have been recent. Earlier work had less effect. In the summer and autumn terms, pupils' safety, behaviour and attitudes remained of significant concern to staff. Much-needed improvements to the quality

of education and the curriculum were not tackled with sufficient urgency. There was little progress in improving the leadership, teaching, and assessment of English and mathematics. Crucial matters were overlooked. Reading, for example, has not been prioritised.

To date there is little evidence of improvement in phonics and reading. Pupils falling behind are not catching up quickly. Too few staff have had effective phonics and reading training. The assessment and tracking of pupils' progress have not been ironed out. Pupils have not accessed high-quality books and phonics resources. Children in the early years and in key stage 1 read infrequently with adults. Records show that they do not practise applying their knowledge of phonics to reading often enough. Not all pupils like reading or handle books correctly. Currently, few pupils are reaching the standards that should be expected of them in phonics and reading.

Leaders were asked to increase opportunities for pupils to develop their fluency and problem-solving in mathematics. Leaders' actions have not led to sustained improvements. Work to develop teachers' subject knowledge and to check pupils' progress have been ineffective. Pupils' knowledge of basic arithmetic is weak. The large majority of pupils in each class are working below the standards expected for their age across mathematics topics. Recently, the seconded key stage 2 leader has begun to lead mathematics. It is an area of particular expertise for him. His own subject knowledge is secure. He is currently reviewing practices and procedures. It is too early to tell if his efforts will bear fruit.

Developments in the wider curriculum are lacking. Leadership of subjects has chopped and changed. There is limited expertise. Subjects are not planned or sequenced effectively. Assessment procedures have not been well thought through. Monitoring and subject-specific staff training is too ad-hoc. Across subjects, pupils' knowledge and outcomes are not improving rapidly enough.

Local authority partners have offered regular support to early years staff. Staff feel that recently this has been helpful. The quality of the provision has been reviewed. It offers safe, more inviting spaces for children. Children's behaviour and attitudes are developing well. However, the leadership of early years has been inconsistent. Staff absence and changes have hampered the pace of improvement. The quality of provision and tasks in reading, mathematics and writing is variable. Challenge and purpose are too often lacking. Some adults' expectations are too low. Assessment procedures are not effective in offering staff a clear picture of what children already know and can do. Subject leaders have not used the early years as a starting point for curriculum developments. They do not have an accurate view of children's starting points. Children's progress and outcomes in early years remain priorities for rapid improvement.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have not secured rapid or sustained improvement. Most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection remain priorities. Staff feel let down. Until recently, too many pupils and staff felt unsupported and unsafe. The quality of education experienced by pupils in each key stage has been poor. Leaders, including governors, have not checked thoroughly enough whether their efforts are effective.

A national leader in governance has been working with governors. The previous inspection report required governors to offer better support and challenge to leaders. A review of governance took place and many recommendations were suggested. A pupil premium review took place. Despite such actions, leaders and governors cannot demonstrate appreciable gains for disadvantaged pupils. Governors have failed in their duty to hold leaders sufficiently to account for the quality of education, pupils' outcomes or staff well-being. The ineffectiveness of governance has contributed to the lack of sustained improvement.

Since working with the school, Impact Education multi-academy trust has increased the school's leadership capacity. You and other acting senior leaders model high expectations effectively. Rules are now clear, consistent and fair. Together, you have secured significant improvements in pupils' attitudes to school and learning. Recently, pupils' attendance shows signs of steady improvement. Pupils' behaviour and conduct in lessons and outside are much better. Adults and pupils feel much safer and happier. Morale has lifted. A respectful, calm and purposeful ethos is steadily blossoming.

The acting assistant headteacher is an experienced SENCo. Recently, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are getting a better deal. The SENCo is ensuring that the individual needs of pupils are identified promptly and more accurately. Those at risk of exclusion are now getting the support they need in a timely manner. Pupils whose education has been hampered by ineffective, part-time timetables are getting back into school. Pupils with SEND tell me teachers are helping them. The personal, social and emotional health and well-being of pupils is improving.

You recognise that an agreed, whole-school approach to the teaching of reading is needed. The recently appointed key stage 1 leader is knowledgeable. She is working with you to develop a structured, systematic approach to phonics. In your role as English leader, you have reviewed the reading books available for pupils. New phonetically decodable books have now been bought. This work is at the early stages of implementation.

Recent efforts have been well received and appreciated by many. Parents find that you and other senior leaders are approachable. They say leaders make themselves available and are visible on the yard each day. Parents, staff and pupils know that

leaders care and are listening to their views. The school community is starting to pull together.

The CEO of Impact Education multi-academy trust has invested in the school. He has worked well with local authority partners recently to ensure that the school's effectiveness can start to turn around.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Impact Education multi-academy trust is working with the school to provide additional leadership capacity. Their early efforts are making a positive difference. Staff and pupils feel valued and respected. The ethos is one of optimism.
- Acting senior leaders are knowledgeable. They have a clear vision for improvement. Their work has already had a measurable impact on vulnerable pupils and families, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Pupils' needs have been identified more accurately. The attendance of pupils with historically high absence is steadily improving.
- Safeguarding has been prioritised. Recently, statutory policies have been put in place. Procedures for managing concerns are now robust. Training has ensured that staff know how and to whom they must report incidents and concerns. Staff understand the risks associated with county lines and criminal gangs. Pupils and staff feel safer.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly in the last few weeks. Rewards and consequences are consistent. Pupils know what is expected of them. They can explain what is right and wrong. This is allowing staff and pupils the chance to build a positive, respectful rapport. Pupils' attitudes to learning are much more positive.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Over time, there has been turbulence in leadership and changes in staffing. There has not been a consistent, strategic approach to improvement. A clear focus on the correct priorities and a sense of urgency have been missing. An approach to reading is not embedded. This lack of oversight has contributed to the slow pace of progress. The quality of education remains of significant concern.
- Leadership capacity has been weak. The curriculum has suffered. It has not held pupils' interests or met their needs. Subject-specific staff training in reading, writing and mathematics has not brought about increased expertise or improved pupils' outcomes. Subjects have been poorly planned and sequenced. Leaders' checks and assessment processes have been ineffective. Pupils' weak knowledge and understanding of subjects across the curriculum is hampering their success.

- Despite support, governors have been ineffective. They have not held leaders sufficiently to account for progress against the priorities identified in April 2019. Governors have a weak understanding of their duties and roles. They have not improved their own knowledge in a concerted or effective manner.

External support

Recently, Impact Education multi-academy trust has been providing helpful and much needed support. This is having a positive impact on safeguarding, senior leadership and pupils' behaviour.

The local authority commissioned external support for leaders, staff and governors. A national leader in education, a national leader in governance, an early years adviser and Kirklees learning partners provided guidance and training. Several factors combined to render their efforts to address the priorities ineffective. These include issues of recruitment and staff instability. The support offered has had little effect on improving pupils' outcomes or the quality of education provided by the school.