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25 March 2020

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

Dear Mrs Smith

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

Following my visit with Daniel Constable, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 4–5 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2019. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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.

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 of the multi-academy trust, 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 a greater impact on the achievement of pupils across the school
  - teachers receive the professional development they need to strengthen teaching and improve pupil outcomes particularly in reading and writing
  - governors rigorously monitor the impact of the pupil premium funding and the progress that disadvantaged pupils make
  - provision for pupils with SEND is reviewed to ensure that the identification of their needs is accurate and that teaching helps them to make 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.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 4–5 March 2020**

### **Evidence**

We met with the headteacher and leaders. We met with representatives from the governing body and from the trust. We also met with representatives from the trust which is proposing to manage the school following the re-brokering process. We spoke to a representative from the local authority. We spoke to pupils and to a small number of parents and carers. We read documents relating to school improvement, including the revised statement of action. We scrutinised other relevant documents, including those relating to behaviour and safeguarding.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, a new special educational needs coordinator has been appointed who is also the early years leader. Three teachers have left. Their classes are taught by agency staff. A member of the senior leadership team has recently returned from an extended period of absence. At the time of this visit, the staff were being consulted on the proposed transfer from Chapel Street Community Schools Trust to STEP Academy Trust.

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

Since the last monitoring visit, school leaders have addressed the key areas for improvement with a greater sense of purpose. This is largely due to the work they have undertaken with the incoming academy trust. With the support of representatives from the proposed new trust, leaders have revised and sharpened the statement of action. Trust representatives have also devised a new programme of staff training.

Teachers are enthusiastic about this new training and are using the ideas it gives them. They plan tasks to meet pupils' differing needs in writing. Pupils' books show that they learn new skills, building on the lesson or lessons before. However, leaders' approach to the teaching of handwriting is left too much to individual teachers. Although leaders expect every teacher to model the use of an agreed cursive script, this does not happen in practice. Some teachers do not devote time to the direct teaching of handwriting and spelling. Pupils' presentation and spelling skills do not steadily improve as pupils become older.

In mathematics, leaders have introduced a new approach. This is helping pupils to gain confidence in mathematics and to attempt more complex questions. One pupil told inspectors they, 'now felt in control of their learning.'

Leaders have improved the teaching of reading. We saw children in early years thoroughly engrossed in reading a range of good-quality books. Some read quietly

in the comfortable book corner, others to staff. A few read to their parents. These parents told us how much they appreciated being involved in their child's education. Every class has dedicated daily reading time and books to support phonics teaching are now fully decodable. Leaders have checked that all pupils have the phonics knowledge they need to read new and unfamiliar books. They have plans to teach older pupils the phonics skills they need to help them to catch up with their peers.

As part of this monitoring visit, we reviewed leaders' plans for developing the wider curriculum. Leaders have a clear vision and rationale for the curriculum but pupils are not receiving their full entitlement. The curriculum statement does not explain well enough how learning is organised. Lessons are not taking place in all subjects across all year groups. Timetables for pupils in Years 2 and 6 include specific sessions devoted to SATs and only one year group is taught a modern foreign language.

Also, as part of this monitoring visit, we reviewed behaviour and in particular low level disruption. While this aspect of the school was judged to be good at the time of the last inspection, on this visit we considered the behaviour in some classes to be a factor in disrupting learning. A small number of pupils are not always respectful and polite. Some call out in class and use delaying tactics when moving from one activity to another.

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

Senior leaders now check the implementation of the statement of action and the impact of the new training programme. They discuss their findings at weekly meetings. However, records of their meetings lack sharpness. They do not record precisely enough what is going well and what needs to change.

The recently appointed subject leaders are enthusiastic and conscientious. They welcome the responsibilities senior leaders give them. Outgoing trust leaders have supported this group of staff in their development. The early signs are positive. For example, the purchasing of new reading materials is enabling teachers to help pupils read more widely and improve their phonics knowledge.

Changes in the leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are at a very early stage. It is too soon to say whether or not the new arrangements will be sufficient to support all pupils with SEND. Leaders have not yet developed a strategy for meeting the needs of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties without recourse to exclusion. This means that pupils are excluded too readily.

Governors are not fulfilling their statutory duties. They are committed to securing improvement and have worked with both the incoming and outgoing trusts to facilitate a smooth transition. However, they are not holding leaders to account and monitoring the impact of the actions they are taking.

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

- The revised statement of action is now being implemented and followed.
- Newly appointed subject leaders are starting to make a difference.
- The involvement of the incoming trust in supporting the school to improve.
- The changes made to the teaching of reading.

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

- The lack of urgency in developing effective systems for monitoring school improvement.
- The lack of precision in noting strengths and weaknesses and taking action to address them.
- The lack of accountability measures set by governors.

### **External support**

The school is well supported by an informal partnership between the outgoing and incoming trusts. This work has led to more focused school improvement activity. School leaders also make appropriate links with the local authority to support them in their work to keep children safe, improve attendance and manage behaviour.

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, leaders have taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose.