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23 January 2014

Miss Joanna White/Mrs Judith Hirst  
Headteacher  
The Edmunds Primary School  
Lobwood  
Worsbrough Bridge  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
S70 5EP

Dear Miss White/Mrs Judith Hirst

## **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Edmunds Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2014, 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 which 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 which took place in October 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive leaders, other senior leaders and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action, the school's improvement plan and other documents provided by the school were evaluated. The executive leaders took Her Majesty's Inspector on a tour of the school.

### **Context**

The headteacher left the school at the end of November 2013. Since January 2014, The Edmunds School has been led by two executive leaders who are the headteacher and deputy headteacher of a local primary school. One new teacher started in January 2014.

The school will become an academy as part of Saint Mary's Academy Trust in summer 2014.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Following the appointment of the executive leaders there has been rapid action which is having a very positive impact. Staff in the school are delighted by the improvements. One senior leader described the changes as, 'mammoth but brilliant'. Staff morale is very high.

The executive leaders clearly understand what needs to be done to improve the school and the steps needed to make that improvement. This is reflected in the improvement plan which details the actions to be taken, who will lead the actions, a description of what success will look like and how it will be monitored. However, the plan lacks milestones to show exactly what improvements will be seen and by when, in teaching and learning, pupils' progress and attendance.

Radical changes have been made to the subjects taught so they are more engaging for pupils. The themes for teaching are based around the books the classes are reading. Teachers say they are enjoying planning new activities which better meet the needs of the pupils. Pupils are highly motivated by their learning.

Reading is a key focus. A large number of new books have been purchased and vibrant libraries are being developed in each of the school's buildings. Every pupil now has a reading book to take home. Parents write purposeful comments in their child's reading records every day and there are rewards for reading at home. As a result, effective links between home and school are developing. The school has recruited volunteers so all younger pupils can read to an adult every day. All classes have a daily reading session on their timetable.

Data-tracking systems have improved. The assessment coordinator has analysed the progress of all pupils and identified those who need extra help to make good progress. All of these pupils now have appropriate support to improve their reading, writing or mathematics. The new tracking system is intended to enable teachers to monitor and evaluate the progress of pupils in their class.

Opportunities for learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage are better. Two consultants are working with the teachers to plan a wider range of learning activities both indoors and outdoors. The routines, systems and layout of the foundation stage unit have improved. It is planned that teachers will have the opportunity to observe good practice at another primary school.

Leadership and management have begun to improve. Leaders for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 1 with the Early Years Foundation Stage have been appointed. Teachers now have responsibility for areas of the curriculum and are completing action plans for development of these areas. Teachers recognise they have been empowered to lead change and make decisions. One said, 'we now have the power and the tools to do things'.

Improvements in teaching and learning are at an early stage. New formats are used to plan lessons and teachers are planning together so they can share good ideas. They have visited the partner school to look at the learning environment and further visits are planned to observe teaching and learning. A cycle of staff meetings has started and training has, for example, been provided about what is outstanding teaching and learning. The executive leaders have made dramatic improvements to the classrooms and the resources available to teachers.

A new pupil welfare team is monitoring attendance and punctuality and forging links with parents. The school recognises the need to raise the profile of attendance with pupils and families and to refresh the reward system for good attendance.

Very strong, proactive support is provided by the local authority representative who acted quickly to broker the new leadership arrangements. The local authority has given financial support to enable the purchase of essential resources to improve teaching and learning. A school improvement strategy group (the SISG), which includes the local authority representative, governors and school leaders is monitoring the impact of actions taken to improve the school. The local authority statement of action sets out clearly what needs to be done to improve the school and its leadership. The statement has success criteria for pupils' progress at the end of the year but lacks milestones. As part of the plan to improve leadership the local authority has applied to the Secretary of State to establish an Interim Executive Board. When this has been agreed the governing body will step down. In the meantime the Chair of the Governing Body is working closely with the local authority to effect school improvement and governors play an important monitoring role on the SISG. The local authority is meeting with the executive leaders and the academy sponsor to ensure a smooth transition when the school becomes an academy.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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 Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

**Her Majesty's Inspector**