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28 February 2014

Mr J Reid / Mr J Sharp  
Co-headteachers  
Normanton Junior School  
Church Lane  
Normanton  
West Yorkshire  
WF6 1EY

Dear Mr Reid / Mr Sharp

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Normanton Junior School**

Following my visit with Peter Marsh, Additional Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 February 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which 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:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Corporate Director, Children and Young People for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Bowyer

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2013.**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in order to raise pupils' attainment, particularly in writing, by making sure that:
  - work given to pupils always matches their varying needs and abilities and that all groups of pupils are effectively challenged, particularly the more-able
  - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils are clear about what is expected of them so that they can reach their potential
  - teachers' marking always gives pupils clear and specific information about how to improve their writing skills
  - teachers give pupils more opportunities to improve their writing
  - teachers make sure that pupils have the chance to become actively involved in lessons and to complete tasks on their own. This is to help them maintain concentration and interest
  - teachers insist that pupils produce writing to the highest standards of which they are capable and that they always present their work well.
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - developing the skills of senior leaders and extending the role of subject leader to more staff so that there is a shared approach to evaluating the school's performance, improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement
  - making sure that school improvement plans focus clearly and precisely on how the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement will be improved
  - ensuring that plans made for developing pupils' skills do not mean that pupils repeat what they already know and can do as they move through the school
  - undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved providing the necessary training to develop the roles and skills of governors so that they are fully involved in driving improvement and know exactly how to hold the school to account
  - making sure arrangements for managing the performance of staff are fully in place so that staff are held to account for pupils' achievement and are well supported in bringing about improvement.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 February 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors, along with the co-headteachers, observed teaching, scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated findings. Inspectors observed the co-headteachers' feeding back to staff on lesson observations, scrutinised relevant documents, including the reviewed action plan, met with the co-headteachers, relevant staff, pupils, parents, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors took account of responses on Parent View and a staff survey. The co-headteachers participated in all team meetings.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, there has been a change of headteacher. The infant school headteacher, who was acting executive headteacher, returned to her own school at the end of the autumn term. In the interim, the local authority has appointed two experienced leaders to the co-headship of the school. Staff seconded from both schools have returned to their substantive posts. One member of staff has returned from maternity leave and another from sick leave. This has resulted in several classes having a change of teacher mid-year.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Attainment and progress is improving, particularly in Years 5 and 6. In Years 3 and 4 it remains inadequate, because teachers are still not using what they know about pupils to inform next steps in learning. Too often, this is resulting in a lack of challenge for all groups, but especially the more able. It is also creating gaps in learning for the least able. This concurs with pupil progress information and concerns raised by the special needs coordinator about the progress of pupils with special needs. This is further exacerbated by some of these teachers not marking work on a daily basis and, in too many classes, misconceptions not being tackled. Year group teachers plan together. They follow planning religiously, with little regard to their pupils' learning needs. When inspectors met with parents, those with pupils in Year 3 raised concerns about their children's progress. Some expressed their concern in writing.

In Years 5 and 6, progress is much better, because teaching is better. Some inconsistencies remain, which result in variability in pupils' achievement on a day-to-day basis. However, over time ground has been gained and in some cases this has been significant, particularly in writing. This means that the present Year 6 are much closer to being on track to make two levels of progress in reading and mathematics, but not yet in writing. This is because of the enormity of prior underachievement in this aspect. However, the gap in achievement in writing for pupils with special needs is closing rapidly.

The impact of direction from senior leaders to raise standards in handwriting and presentation is clearly evident in Years 5 and 6, but is not as good in Years 3 and 4.

There is more ground to be gained in improving writing if the school is to meet the national floor standards for combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

A comparison of pupils' work and reading with assessment information shows that there has been an improvement in the accuracy of teacher assessment but, it is still not as accurate as it needs to be. When comparing attainment data with teachers' ability groupings, there are clearly some pupils not being grouped correctly. Combined with issues with staff absence, this is still leading to low expectation, resulting in underachievement and, in some cases, a regression in attainment levels in Year 3 and in some Year 4 classes.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving steadily and more teaching is good, but inadequate teaching remains in some classes. Some elements of outstanding practice were seen during the inspection.

Where learning is good teachers are using assessment and marking to adapt year group plans to match teaching and activities well to the ability of pupils to provide appropriate challenge and support. In lessons, they use questioning to deepen pupils' thinking and understanding which moves learning on and they check on progress to redirect learning, if necessary. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson, when pupils were encouraged to empathise with different groups of people affected by deforestation in order to support their writing of a balanced argument. The teacher used questioning to challenge pupils to justify their viewpoints. The next day, this resulted in some high quality writing of a balanced argument. Marking and feedback are used to good effect in writing to promote good progress. These teachers give clear and specific information on well pupils are doing and what they need to do to improve their writing skills. They give pupils opportunities to respond to this to improve the content and style of their writing and/or correct errors in punctuation and spelling. Teaching and learning are engaging and purposeful, which lead to good attitudes to learning. In the English lessons observed during the inspection, where learning was good, teachers had good subject knowledge. Learning objectives were clear and pupils fully understood what was expected of them. These teachers know exactly where they want pupils to be and how to get them there. This is accelerating progress for pupils in these classes.

Where teaching still requires improvement or is inadequate, there is a lack of clarity in lesson objectives which results in pupils not understanding what they are learning and why. Joint planning across the year group hinders progress because teachers' plans do not take into account what they know about the pupils they teach from

assessment and from their own marking. As a result, there is a serious mismatch in what pupils can do and are asked to do at all levels. This leads to a notable regression in progress, particularly in Year 3 and in some Year 4 classes. Despite this, pupils now display patience and resilience in lessons where they struggle or find work too easy.

Teachers have worked hard to improve learning environments to support and model high standards in writing better. For instance, working walls which track the writing process are a feature of all classrooms and these are being used to good effect in most classes. Pupils know why they have these walls and value being able to share ideas and learning.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

There has been a tangible improvement in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, even in lessons where teaching is weaker. In some classes, where teaching is not as good as it needs to be, increased adult presence is supporting behaviour management. This is resulting in a calmer working environment. Pupils confirm that improvements have been made. Parents of pupils in Year 3 raised concerns about behaviour, but generally, other parents were positive about behaviour over time. Most adults are responding promptly and appropriately to poor behaviour, following the policy and procedures agreed. This is leading to better behaviour in lessons and a calmer and safer environment for pupils and staff to work in and learn. A zero-tolerance policy from the co-headteachers has resulted in a number of fixed-term exclusions this term. Inspectors saw no incidence of overtly poor behaviour during the inspection and school logs indicate that there is a reduction in incidents. However, leaders say a small minority of pupils continue to be a challenge. It is essential that the school continues to be more proactive about the support that some of these pupils need. Pupils appreciate the three-steps warning system, which they say is improving behaviour, but it is not always followed through consistently by some teachers.

Pupils feel safe in school and articulate the reasons why. They say staff are approachable and they can talk to them about their concerns. They value the constant presence of adults in the playground and around school and the work of the playground buddies. They say the incidences of bullying have reduced 'dramatically'. Most has been name-calling, but they say adults have dealt with this.

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

Changes to the senior leadership of the school since January, have not slowed progress. The co-headteachers have quickly assessed where the school is at and taken action. They have actively built upon the foundation provided by the executive headteacher during the autumn term. This means that reasonable progress has been made.

A new leadership team has been established, but this at an early stage of development. It is fragile because the co-headteacher post is a temporary measure and other senior leaders and middle leaders, such as year group leaders and subject leaders, are in the early stages of developing their role. However, early work by middle leaders in developing and monitoring learning environments and standards is starting to bear fruit.

School self-evaluation is accurate. This means that leaders are focused precisely on what needs to be done to secure the improvements needed.

Recent changes to performance management procedures have brought greater rigour in holding teachers to account. Teachers have a better understanding of their responsibilities and know that they will be held to account.

The joint scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrated that the curriculum in English and mathematics is not fit for purpose. It is not ensuring breadth, balance and progression. There are no cohesive, long-term or medium-term plans from which teachers can take the building blocks for learning and make purposeful links across the curriculum to use and apply basic skills in other subject areas. There is limited opportunity for personal development and enrichment. This was an aspect of the action plan that was not completed by December 2013 and needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency.

Safeguarding meets statutory requirements. However, most systems are still reactive rather than proactive. The school is seeking to engage the local authority and multi-agency support fully to tackle some of the issues relating to vulnerable pupils. It is considering further the best use of the pastoral team to ensure that all pupils attend regularly, have a happy, safe and productive day in school and that their needs are met well.

Attendance is presently in line with national averages, but there are no systems in place to tackle persistent absence, which is high compared to the national average. Punctuality has improved as a result of the systems introduced and the rigour with which lateness is pursued.

The Interim Executive Board fulfils the statutory duties required of a governing body and continues to monitor and challenge the progress of the school. It is receiving better information in order to provide the challenge needed. It fully understand the school's position and its immediate priorities because of the rigour of the checks made and is holding leaders to account. It has taken action to meet with parents to try and alleviate concerns about the change of leadership and has set up a parents' forum with a desire to give parents a voice. It recognises the urgency of securing effective governance for the school and plans are in place to develop this in the coming weeks.

## **External support**

The local authority is providing regular support which is focused on the areas for improvement. The School Improvement Adviser is working in partnership with the co-headteachers to develop the roles of other leaders in order to secure and sustain effective leadership in the long term. This is supported through the work of external consultants for mathematics and English, which is beginning to sharpen the skills of these leaders. Meetings are under way to discuss and plan a more permanent solution for the headship of the school.