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23 October 2014

Mr Andrew Denton  
The Headteacher  
Leamore Primary School  
Bloxwich Road  
Walsall  
WS3 2BB

Dear Mr Denton

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

Following my visit with Chris Chapman, Associate Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 October, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 school should 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better so that all pupils make good progress as they move through the school, by ensuring that teachers:
  - make it clear what they want pupils to learn in all lessons
  - set work that expects more of pupils which is well matched to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly the most able, so all pupils are fully engaged and behave well
  - increase suitable support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, so they make rapid progress
  - move learning on in lessons at a brisker pace
  - check closely on pupils' progress in lessons so they know how well they are doing.
- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics for all groups of pupils by:
  - improving the clarity and fluency in pupils' spoken language and of children's speaking and listening skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - ensuring pupils understand the underlying meaning in the texts that they read in different subjects to improve their reading skills
  - helping pupils extend their ideas in longer pieces of writing in English and in other subjects
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to practise their calculation skills in solving more practical and real-life mathematical problems.
- Increase the capacity of leaders, managers and governors to improve the school by making sure that:
  - senior and subject leaders make accurate and rigorous checks on the impact of teaching on
  - the progress of different groups of pupils during lesson observations and reviews of pupils' written work
  - plans for improvement are fine-tuned to establish the key priorities in securing speedy improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
  - the governing body has a fuller and accurate picture of the school's weaknesses and effectively challenges senior leaders to tackle them with a greater sense of urgency.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 October**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. Two of the lessons observed were joint observations with the headteacher. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the teacher with responsibility for mathematics, four members of the governing body and the staff as a whole. Telephone conversations were held with two representatives from the local authority. Inspectors also observed playtimes, spoke with groups of pupils, heard some of them read and talked to parents at the beginning of the school day.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection two teachers and one teaching assistant have left the school. Two assistant headteachers have taken up post. One has responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and the other has responsibility for Key Stage 2.

A new community governor has been appointed. A teaching assistant has taken up post in Nursery. The special educational needs coordinator is due to leave the school this week.

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

Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making better progress from their starting points than has previously been the case. Standards achieved by pupils remain below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, an increasing number of pupils reached the higher Level 3 in writing and mathematics in 2014. Evidence from pupils' workbooks shows that, since September, progress is continuing to improve. This is as a result of improved teaching.

Children continue to make improving progress in Nursery because expectations are high and teaching is good. However, too few children reached the expected level of development by the end of Reception in 2014. This is because of persistent weaknesses in teaching. As a result, pupils have not been well prepared to start Year 1. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum in Year 1 has been suitably adapted to ensure that pupils can catch up quickly. Early indications are that this is beginning to be successful.

At the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics remains below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in mathematics is exceptionally low and well below that predicted by the school. This is, in part, as a result of the legacy of poor teaching over time. However, leaders have failed to ensure that this group of pupils made rapid enough improvement in

mathematics last year to make up for previous lost ground. In reading, pupils made better progress than in 2013, with almost all pupils making the progress that is expected, and a quarter making good progress. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in writing has also shown some improvement.

The progress of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is too variable. There is an increasing proportion who are making expected or better than expected progress. However, there is still a proportion who are not progressing quickly enough.

Progress in reading has improved across the school. This is because teachers have benefited from training in guided reading and leaders have provided them with clearer guidance about what is expected. As a result, the teaching of reading has improved. Pupils are provided with books and activities that are at the right level of challenge. They are practising their reading skills more regularly and are better able to answer questions about what they have read. Pupils are not yet confident in explaining the strategies that they are using to answer questions about their reading. Pupils say that they enjoy the weekly on-line 'Bug Club' sessions because they are fun. This is also introducing pupils to books that they would not have selected to read otherwise.

Leaders are making regular checks on English books to ensure that pupils are being provided with more opportunities to write longer pieces of work. As a result of their feedback, there is evidence of improvement in pupils' work. However, pupils are not being given the same opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English.

Clear expectations have been set that four out of five mathematics lessons should include an element of problem solving or logic work. Evidence from checks made on teaching and from pupils' books shows that pupils are undertaking this work more often. However, it is still not frequent enough to help pupils to use what they know in a confident and efficient way.

Whilst improvement in pupils' progress is evident, there is still much work to be done, particularly in Years 5 and 6, to ensure that pupils reach the standards that are achieved by other pupils nationally.

### **The quality of teaching**

There is evidence that teaching continues to improve. Evidence from pupils' books and records of checks made on the quality of teaching confirm that the proportion of teaching that is good has increased since the last monitoring inspection. A small amount of inadequate teaching remains. Appropriate measures are in place to address this. Governors and senior leaders are clear that good or better teaching is required to enable pupils to make faster progress.

Systems to ensure that pupils understand the purpose of their learning in each lesson are embedded across the school. Teachers are routinely providing activities at different levels of difficulty during mathematics and English lessons. Where teaching is at its best, these tasks are providing an appropriate level of challenge for the most able and the right level of support for those who need extra help. This is not yet consistent across the school because some teachers are not as skilled at matching the activities precisely to the ability of the most able pupils. Teachers regularly provide pupils with guidance on how to be successful in their learning. This helps pupils to know how to complete their work to a better standard.

Marking has improved and is becoming more consistent. There is a revised policy in place which is being followed by all staff. Inconsistencies remain in the quality of the advice that teachers provide. Not all teachers are equally skilled at providing precise guidance about what could be improved or how to take the next step in the learning. Particularly good practice was seen in Years 1 and 2 mathematics books, where pupils are provided with a clear 'next step' to take in their learning. Pupils are expected to complete this 'next step' and are given time to do so. The presentation in pupils' workbooks is improving. This is as a result of higher expectations from staff and the introduction of a new handwriting scheme across the school.

In almost all cases, teaching assistants are providing effective support to pupils. This is because they are being deployed well throughout the lesson and have been well briefed by the teacher as to what pupils should achieve. This is enabling pupils to achieve more in each lesson and, as a result, is beginning to improve progress. Support for disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is not yet consistent. This is resulting in an uneven picture of progress for these pupils.

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

The behaviour policy has recently been revised and provides clearer guidance for staff on how to reward good behaviour and challenge unacceptable behaviour. This has improved consistency across the school. Most pupils are keen to collect the 'dojo' points that are awarded and exchange them for rewards.

As the proportion of good teaching improves, more pupils are becoming motivated, attentive and enthusiastic about their learning. Where teaching is good, pupils are keen to learn new things, volunteer answers and ideas and maintain positive behaviour throughout lessons. Pupils told inspectors that learning is more fun and they enjoy it more, but explained there are lessons where a few pupils do not listen as well as they should and, although most teachers deal with it quickly, it can interrupt learning.

There are a small number of pupils who display challenging behaviour. Evidence from observations and scrutiny of behaviour records indicate that there are effective measures in place to support these pupils to learn to make better decisions about

their behaviour. A nurture group has been established to help pupils to talk about how they feel and develop strategies to deal with feelings such as anger and sadness. Where exclusion is used, records show that pupils have received extra support and help and exclusion has been used as a last resort.

Playtimes and lunchtimes are lively and busy and pupils generally play well together. A change in the lunchtime timetable has resulted in fewer pupils on the playground; however, some pupils report that football continues to dominate and arguments from this can sometimes spill over into the afternoon lessons. Observations during the inspection showed that this is partly because pupils do not make use of the full extent of the playground. Twice weekly a sports coach organises games for pupils during the lunch hour. This helps to involve more pupils in a wider range of activities.

Attendance is below the national average but continues to improve steadily. The system for recording and following up on lateness has improved and, as a result, the number of lates recorded has been halved.

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

The headteacher and deputy headteacher continue to lead the improvement of the school in a committed and methodical way. They are conducting more frequent checks on the quality of teaching, with a sharper focus on the areas for improvement identified in the inspection in October 2013. Precise feedback is provided to teachers and there is evidence that this is having an impact on improving the quality of teaching. More specific guidance has been provided to staff about expectations in marking and in the teaching of guided reading. As a result, improvements have been made in both of these areas. There is a clear understanding that the pace of improvement needs to continue to increase.

The recently appointed leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 has quickly gained an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of her areas of responsibility. She has a clear vision about what is to be achieved and the pace of improvement required. Weekly team meetings have been introduced to share good practice and to ensure expectations are consistent. Her appointment has added to the school's capacity to make the improvements required.

Improvements in the teaching of reading and writing are as a result of the effective leadership of the deputy headteacher. She has an accurate understanding of how pupils are achieving in these subjects and of the quality of teaching across the school. The leadership of mathematics is less well developed. This should be addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure that standards in mathematics improve rapidly.

The special educational needs coordinator has benefited from working alongside a consultant. However the coordinator is leaving the school and a replacement has not been appointed. Although the consultant will remain in place for a day per week, this limits the capacity of school leaders to effect continued improvement in this area. There have been some rapid improvements in governance since the last monitoring visit. The addition of two new experienced governors has increased the capacity and knowledge of the governing body. An action plan has been created in response to the findings of the external review of governance and a schedule of governor visits to school has begun. Governors are now able to make a link between what they see for themselves in school, the information they receive about pupils' progress and what they are told by senior leaders. This is helping governors to ask more probing questions and better hold the school leaders to account. There is still work to be done to ensure that governors fully understand the information they are provided with about pupils' progress and how this compares to information about schools nationally.

### **External support**

Since the last monitoring inspection the local authority adviser has made visits to the school. However, the reports that are produced are scant and lack detail. They do not provide senior leaders with clear information about how to bring about further improvements, nor do they provide leaders with an evaluation of how much progress they are making. The local authority end of year review offered no further information other than that provided by the inspection report from October 2013 and a summary of the monitoring visits made by Her Majesty's Inspector. The local authority has been too slow in organising a school for Leamore to partner with. This has only very recently taken place and support work is yet to start.

Some support has been provided. The governors have been assisted in the development of an action plan following the external review. The adviser has brokered the secondment of an assistant headteacher with responsibility for Key Stage 2.

The headteacher continues to engage the services of external consultants to support improvements in teaching. For example, a mathematics consultant has provided helpful staff training on planning more opportunities for pupils to solve real-life problems and logic puzzles. A literacy consultant has been used to provide an external view of the improvements being made in guided reading.