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12 December 2014

Mrs N Matharu and Mrs A Dyson  
The Interim Headteacher and Associate Headteacher  
King's Hill Primary School  
Old Park Road  
Wednesbury  
West Midlands  
WS10 9JG

Dear Mrs Matharu and Mrs Dyson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of King's Hill Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 December 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection without first discussing and agreeing such an appointment with me.

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

Morag Kophamel  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that pupils make good progress by making sure teachers:
  - match the level of work more closely to the pupils' ability
  - give high-quality feedback to pupils about their work and make sure they act upon this guidance
  - give clear direction to teaching assistants so they are used more effectively to support pupils' learning
  - challenge the more-able pupils, giving them more opportunities for extended writing and problem solving in mathematics in different subjects
  - teach phonics (the sounds letters make) for as long as pupils need it and make sure pupils learn correct grammar and punctuation.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by making sure leaders:
  - address pupils' underperformance by frequently checking their attainment and progress towards challenging targets and swiftly acting to address any identified concerns
  - closely check the progress of different group of pupils, especially those supported by the pupil premium, and act to ensure they do not fall further behind
  - improve the way assessment data are used by all staff, so they have a better knowledge of pupils' attainment and use this in their lesson planning
  - frequently monitor the impact of small-group work on pupils' progress, and use this information to effectively deploy resources to accelerate pupils' progress
  - ensure governors have an accurate knowledge of the achievement of different groups of pupils in the school, a better understanding of the impact of different strategies, and hold leaders to account for improving the pupils' progress.

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

## **Report on the monitoring inspection on the third monitoring inspection 10 and 11 December 2014.**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and associate headteacher. A discussion was held with the Chair of the Governing Body, and a telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority. I visited 15 lessons to observe teaching and learning. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with the English or mathematics leaders. I met with three groups of pupils and with a group of teaching assistants. Informal discussions were held with staff and pupils over the two days of the inspection. I also looked at the work in pupils' books. In addition, I spoke with several members of the leadership team from the Holte group of schools who have been providing support to King's Hill.

### **Context**

There has been a considerable number of significant changes since my last visit to King's Hill. The external review of governance, recommended at the time of the section 5 inspection, was carried out at the end of the summer term. At this time there were several vacancies on the governing body. Following the review, the Chair of the Governing Body resigned and the Vice-Chair became Chair. Very sadly, during the summer holidays, the new Chair of the Governing Body died. The local authority school improvement adviser secured the services of a retired headteacher who joined the governing body and was elected as Chair in September. At the end of September, governors at King's Hill and at Salisbury Primary agreed to dissolve the federation between the two schools. Since then, the governing body has reconstituted and now has seven members.

The previous associate headteacher retired at the end of the summer term and no permanent successor had been appointed. In September, the local authority seconded the school improvement adviser as interim headteacher, initially part time and then full time. The Holte group of schools secured the services of an associate headteacher who has worked at the school, full time since September.

School leaders from Holte were initially commissioned by the local authority to provide support to the federation. As the federation has now been dissolved, the local authority and governors, in discussion with the executive headteacher at Holte, have taken the decision that their support should come to an end at the end of this term. An exit strategy is in place. From January 2015, the interim headteacher, previously the school improvement adviser, will be the sole interim headteacher until a new substantive headteacher can be appointed.

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

There are early signs that improvements in teaching are beginning to lead to improvement in pupils' achievement. The proportion of pupils who are working at the standards expected for their age has risen in reading, writing and mathematics.

In 2014, the proportion of pupils who reached a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage more than doubled from 2013, but remained well below average. Information about children currently in the Nursery and Reception classes indicates that the improving trend is continuing.

Although the attainment of pupils leaving Year 2 in 2014 remained well below the average nationally, there were improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 rose by more than 10 percentage points in all three subjects.

Standards in writing for pupils leaving Year 6 in 2014 were considerably better than in 2013, although they remain below the average nationally. Attainment in mathematics also improved. However, in reading there was little improvement.

Evidence from lesson observations and from a review of the work in pupils' books since September shows that standards are beginning to rise; in some classes and subjects, pupils are now making good progress. However, there is still a great deal of ground to make up and some pupils have considerable gaps to close to make up for previous underachievement.

A new approach to the teaching of mathematics is having a positive impact and pupils' ability to recall addition, subtraction and multiplication facts is improving, along with their calculation skills. However, in some classes there are still too few opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematics in solving problems.

More opportunities for writing, along with improvements in the teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation, have started to lead to improvements in the standard of pupils' written work in some classes. For example, in the Year 2 class, around half of pupils were able to write their own version of the story of *The Snowman* with correct punctuation and sentence structure. Pupils' spelling of common words was generally accurate and pupils made sensible attempts at spelling some more ambitious word choices.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teachers and teaching assistants are responding very positively to the increased level of challenge and support provided by school leaders. The majority have acted promptly on the feedback and guidance given to them following leaders' checks on their work, and this is leading to improvements in teaching. For example, most teachers and teaching assistants are now using questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and to extend their learning.

More teachers are now using information about the attainment and progress of pupils in their class effectively to plan work which builds on what pupils of different ability already know, understand and can do. This is helping pupils to make better progress. However, this is not yet consistent in all classes and sometimes work is too hard or too easy to enable pupils to make rapid progress.

When teachers work with a group in reading lessons, this is generally effective because teachers ask questions to check understanding and encourage pupils to apply and develop reading skills including phonic knowledge (the sounds that letters make). However, the tasks given to pupils to complete independently often do not help them to make good progress in reading. For example, some pupils copy out pages from their reading books or draw pictures.

In mathematics, a new approach is helping teachers to become more skilled and effective in the systematic teaching and daily rehearsal of number facts and in the teaching of calculation methods.

The deployment of teaching assistants in lessons is now more effective in most classes. Teachers check that teaching assistants are clear about their role and purpose in each lesson and ensure that they know what pupils are expected to achieve. This is contributing to improvements in pupils' progress. Occasionally, the grammar used by teaching assistants when they speak to pupils provides a poor example.

Most teachers are now using marking more effectively to give guidance to pupils on what they have achieved and what they should do to improve their work. In some classes, teachers take opportunities to provide an additional challenge or to ask a question to check understanding. This is helping pupils to make good progress. However, these improvements are not yet evident in all classes.

The interim headteacher has worked with teachers to ensure that in each classroom the wall displays provide helpful reminders and prompts, which support pupils in their learning. Additional classroom resources have been purchased so that pupils have the basic tools and equipment that they need for each lesson.

Teachers are now ensuring that phonics lessons for younger pupils include engaging activities, well-chosen examples, and correct pronunciation of the sounds that letters make. Teachers are ensuring that there are frequent opportunities for pupils to practise writing the sounds that they are learning. Phonics lessons are now timetabled for those pupils in Key Stage 2 who still need this work, although it is too early to measure the impact of this on pupils' reading ability.

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

The very large majority of pupils are respectful to staff and get along well with one another. They are polite and helpful and greet adults cheerfully. The small number

of pupils who sometimes exhibit challenging behaviour are generally well managed by staff. Pupils like the new behaviour reward points and believe that increased clarity about rewards and sanctions is helping them to behave well.

Most pupils behave well in lessons. However, some inattention and off-task behaviour still occur when teaching does not interest pupils or work is not at the right level. Most pupils are keen to talk to adults about their learning; some are able to talk confidently about their targets and about the progress they have made, although this is not yet consistent across the school.

Leaders from Holte have made a number of improvements to the building to ensure that it provides a safe and welcoming environment for pupils.

Current attendance is in line with the national average for primary schools and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing.

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

Since their appointment in September, the interim headteacher and associate headteacher have worked well together in tackling the considerable weaknesses in the school. They have a thorough and accurate understanding of the school's current position and recognise that there is no time to waste in tackling underachievement.

The interim headteacher has focused strongly on improving the quality of teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress. She has worked closely with English and mathematics subject leaders to develop their skills in checking on the work of teachers and the progress and attainment of pupils. Leaders are now making more frequent visits to classrooms and they regularly check on the work in pupils' books. During this inspection, the mathematics and English subject leaders conducted joint visits to lessons with the inspector and were observed giving verbal feedback to teachers. These leaders were able to correctly identify the main strengths and weaknesses in teaching and provided helpful and clear guidance to teachers about how they should improve their work. This is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching.

Written feedback provided to teachers following leaders' checks on their work is generally helpful and is valued by staff. However, comments sometimes describe what teachers did during lessons rather than evaluating the impact of their actions on pupils' learning. Records do not make clear how and when leaders will check that the required improvements have been made.

The mathematics subject leader has visited other schools to consider examples of effective practice and, as a result, she has introduced a new mathematics teaching programme from September. She is providing good support to teachers to help them develop the necessary skills to teach mathematics well. This is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress in mathematics.

The interim headteacher and the English subject leader are fully aware of pupils' significant underachievement in reading as a result of weaknesses in teaching and assessment. The interim headteacher has carried out assessments to determine the reading ages of every pupil so that progress can be more accurately measured and evaluated. The English subject leader and another teacher are trying a more structured approach to reading lessons, which is showing early signs of success with Year 6 pupils.

Leaders are developing more rigorous and effective systems for collecting and evaluating information about pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders now meet more regularly with teachers to check on the progress being made by individuals and groups within each class. This is helping senior and subject leaders to have a clear understanding of the progress of pupils in each class and to identify underachievement.

Leaders from Holte have provided good support to the newly appointed coordinator for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. Small group work and interventions for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs are now monitored much more closely and the coordinator has a good understanding of the impact of each intervention for different pupils and is using this information to inform future work.

Support and interventions for disadvantaged pupils who are underachieving are not evaluated as effectively. The underachievement of this group of pupils has not been targeted using pupil premium funding well enough to ensure that they make good progress.

The governing body was established very recently, but already the Chair of the Governing Body has a clear understanding of the school's current position and of the considerable improvements still required. The local authority has ensured that the governors have a good range of relevant experience and expertise. The Chair has visited the school and has spoken with staff. He and other governors have made it clear that the quality of teaching must improve in order that all pupils can achieve well. Minutes from their initial meetings show that governors ask questions to hold leaders to account and are rightly requesting information about the impact of leaders' actions and the improvements being made in teaching.

### **External support**

The local authority has now taken decisive action by establishing one of its school improvement advisers as interim headteacher until the school is able to successfully appoint a new substantive headteacher. The local authority will be undertaking a review of the use of pupil premium funding in January and intends to provide further support for the development of subject leaders, including their use of data to drive improvement.

The school has received extensive support from leaders at Holte since the summer term. These leaders have been successful in making a range of improvements, including necessary developments in building safety and security and information and communication technology systems. They have made improvements to the management of pupils' attendance and absence and the management of performance for teachers and teaching assistants. They have also supported improvements in Early Years Foundation Stage provision and supported a financial audit.