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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 to your school on 4 and 5 February, 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 fourth 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 may appoint one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection if guidance and support are provided by a senior leader whose quality of teaching is at least consistently good.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 February

Evidence

I observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. One of the lessons observed was completed jointly with the headteacher. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the teacher with responsibility for mathematics, the safeguarding officer, seven members of the governing body, the staff as a whole and two representatives from the local authority. I also observed playtimes and spoke with groups of pupils.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, three governors have resigned and two new ones have taken up post. A part-time Year 3 teacher, the Reception teacher and the special educational needs coordinator, have resigned. The Nursery teacher has moved into Reception. A part-time teacher from Year 3 has moved into the Nursery. A supply teacher is in place in Year 3. The headteacher and staff from Millfield Primary School have been supporting the school.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Evidence from pupils' books and school tracking data show that the progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 continues to improve. An increasing proportion of pupils are making good progress. This is because teaching is good. As a result of previous weak teaching, the current Year 1 pupils were not well equipped to start Year 1. Adjustments have been made to the way in which these pupils are taught and, as a result, pupils are catching up with their peers in other schools. However, too many Year 1 pupils remain below the levels expected for their age. Pupils in Year 2 are making good progress and indications from work in books are that, by the end of the year, results in reading, writing and mathematics will be better than in 2014 and closer to the national average than has previously been the case.

Children continue to make improving progress in Nursery because expectations are high and teaching is good. Progress in Reception class has improved significantly, particularly since the beginning of January. This is as a result of improved teaching. An increasing proportion of children are on track to reach the expected levels by the end of Reception class.

Progress in Key Stage 2 remains too variable. Strategies have been implemented to accelerate the learning of Year 6 pupils, in order to make up for previous weak teaching. For example, pupils are being taught in smaller groups and are receiving additional 'booster' sessions and afterschool clubs, particularly in mathematics. School data indicate that progress for these pupils is accelerating and that end of year results will be significantly improved in writing and mathematics and previous

improvements in reading will be maintained. Nevertheless, results will remain below the national average in all three subjects. In addition, the proportion of pupils on track to make the expected amount of progress from Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 in mathematics is likely to be below that expected nationally.

The progress of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs has improved in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. All pupils are making the progress that is expected and an increasing number are making better than expected progress. In Key Stage 2, progress for these pupils remains variable.

There is evidence that pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding are making better progress than in the past. This is because the additional funding is being more sharply focussed on providing these pupils with effective support. For example, in Year 6, additional individual coaching and small group work in mathematics have been effective in closing the gap between these pupils and their classmates.

While improvements in pupils' progress are evident, there is still a significant amount of work to be done to ensure that all pupils reach the levels of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and there is evidence that over 50% of teaching and learning is now consistently good. Where teaching requires improvement, evidence from pupils' books, observations of teaching and learning, and records of the checks made on the quality of teaching confirm that the coaching provided by senior leaders is having an impact on improving teachers' practice. Most staff understand the need for improvements to be made quickly and are working very hard to achieve this.

Where teaching and learning are most effective, teachers ask questions that make pupils think. They expect pupils to explain their answers and they have high expectations of what can be achieved in each lesson. Pupils are motivated throughout the lesson and are keen to show what they can do. In contrast, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve when they are working on their own. As a result, pupils lack a sense of urgency, waste time and do not make as much progress as they are capable of.

Pupils in all classes are now able to identify what they are learning to do and can explain how they will be successful. Teachers routinely provide pupils with a clear statement about what is to be learned in each lesson. Teachers also provide pupils with a checklist of things to remember to help them to achieve well. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at providing different groups of pupils with different

checklists, expecting more of the higher ability pupils and providing the lower ability pupils with more support.

The gains seen in the last inspection in improved presentation have not been sustained in some classes and subjects. For example, the most able pupils in Year 6 and most pupils in Years 1 and 2 present their work neatly, take pride in their presentation and produce a good volume of work. In contrast, many pupils in Key Stage 2 make little effort to join their handwriting, space their work out appropriately or stick work into their books neatly. This is because teachers' expectations are too low. Where teachers reinforce their expectations, pupils respond well and make improvements but teachers do not sustain these expectations across subjects and between lessons.

Marking in Years 1 and 2 and for the most able pupils in Year 6 is increasingly effective. Pupils are provided with regular and helpful feedback that enables them to improve their work or move onto the next stage in learning. Pupils regularly, but not always, respond to the teachers' advice. For pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and some of Year 6, marking is inconsistent. Teachers in these classes understand the school's expectations of marking and feedback and demonstrate good practice at times in the pupils' books. However, this good practice is not sustained over time and this affects the progress that pupils make.

Teaching assistants provide increasingly effective support to pupils. In-class support and out-of-class small group work are now more precisely focussed and the progress of pupils is measured more regularly. For instance, teaching assistants are providing groups of pupils with specific and daily support with their reading and their understanding of the sounds that letters make. As a result, these pupils are making better progress than in the past. The skills of the higher level teaching assistant in the Nursery have ensured that the progress of children has not been affected by the recent changes in staff.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are well supervised as they move around the school. They generally walk sensibly and respond quickly to adults' instructions. However, pupils do not show self-control when adults are not present in corridors. They often run and are noisy.

In classrooms where teaching is effective, pupils show positive attitudes to learning new things and concentrate well. They demonstrate a keenness to answer and try hard to do well. They say that lessons are fun and that they enjoy them. In contrast, where teaching is less effective, pupils lose concentration, talk when they should be working and waste time, especially when they are not directly supervised by an adult.

There is appropriate support in place for pupils who display particularly challenging behaviour. For example, the nurture group 'Rocketeers' provides effective support for younger pupils. Adults encourage pupils to make the right choices about their behaviour and provide time for pupils to talk about how they feel. Exclusion continues to be used appropriately as a last resort when behaviour is violent or extreme.

Pupils report that playtimes are fun and that they enjoy the equipment that is available to them at lunchtime. Pupils were confident that adults are quick to spot any unacceptable behaviour and deal with it quickly.

Attendance remains below the national average but continues to improve slowly. A new system for monitoring the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent or late has been introduced. This is enabling senior leaders to target resources more effectively. The number of pupils persistently absent has reduced since the last monitoring visit. The number of pupils who are late to school fluctuates significantly from term to term and no sustained reduction has yet been seen.

The school's work to keep pupils safe is effective. Adults know pupils well and respond quickly if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They continue to tackle weaknesses head on and are confident to make difficult decisions where necessary, for example moving the Nursery teacher into the Reception class and providing additional teachers to accelerate progress in Year 6. Leaders are under no illusion about the need for improvements to continue at a fast pace, in order for the school to be removed from special measures.

The quality of teaching is checked regularly and teachers are provided with helpful and precise guidance about how to improve. These checks have rightly focussed more closely on teaching that requires improvement. However, senior leaders are not going back quickly enough to check that teachers have improved their practice as a result of the advice provided. For example, all teachers are aware of the school's policy on pupils presenting their work neatly, but some do not adhere to it consistently and senior leaders are not following this up rigorously enough.

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is leading her team effectively. She is a good role model and has high expectations of staff and pupils alike. Staff are working together as a team to ensure that Year 1 pupils make up for previous lost ground. For example, the Reception teacher works with a small number of Year 1 pupils on a daily basis to improve their writing.

There is currently no-one in school with responsibility for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. As a result, there is no strategic plan for improving the provision for these pupils. Fortnightly support from a consultant has helped staff to understand the needs of the pupils more fully. However, pupils in Key Stage 2 do not make sufficient progress.

The leadership of mathematics has improved since the last monitoring visit. This is as a result of support from the local authority advisor and the mathematics subject leader from the support school. The mathematics leader now understands how well the school is performing compared with others nationally and the strategies that have been put in place to improve the teaching of mathematics. For example, with help from the support school, a new system of teaching mathematics has been introduced.

The safeguarding officer is diligent and methodical in her approach to keeping pupils safe. She is very knowledgeable and responds quickly and effectively to situations that arise. She works well with a range of external agencies.

Governance continues to improve. Governors are more confident to ask the senior leaders for more information about specific areas of school and are asking increasingly probing questions. Their understanding of the use of the pupil premium funding and its impact on pupils' progress has improved considerably. They have an accurate understanding of the areas of school that still need improvement and are aware of the need to ensure that improvements are rapid and sustained. Governors are increasingly knowledgeable about the quality of teaching in the school and how pupils' progress compares with that seen in other schools. Governors are benefitting from working with the Chair of Governors from the support school.

External support

Support and challenge from the local authority have increased since the last monitoring inspection. The local authority advisor visits the school frequently and has an accurate understanding of the challenges facing the school. He is proactive in brokering additional support where necessary.

The support of the headteacher and the staff from Millfield Primary School is having a positive impact on school improvement. For example, a new system of teaching mathematics has been introduced. However, the role of the support school is not sufficiently clear to enable governors and the local authority to be able to hold the headteacher to account for the work that is being completed.

The headteacher continues to be proactive in engaging the services of external consultants to support school improvement. This, along with the local authority, the support school and the drive of the senior leaders, is increasing the capacity of the school to continue to improve.