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21 November 2014

Mr Garry Johnson  
Headteacher  
Millbridge Junior Infant and Nursery School  
Vernon Road  
Liversedge, West Yorkshire  
WF15 6HU

Dear Mr Johnson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Millbridge Junior Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit with James Kilner, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19 and 20 November 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 April 2014. 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.

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 for Children and Adults for Kirklees.

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6, so that it is good or better, to accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
  - inadequate teaching is eradicated
  - all teachers have high expectations about what pupils can achieve
  - teachers plan challenging and exciting activities which provide the appropriate level of challenge for different groups of pupils that sustain their interest and concentration, so that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are always good
  - teachers check pupils' learning and progress more accurately, mark their work more carefully to inform pupils what to do next to improve, and give them time to do so
  - teaching assistants know what is expected of them, and that their skills are developed so they can help pupils to learn effectively.
  
- Ensure that pupils' achievement is good or better in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 to 6, by:
  - encouraging pupils to read more, in school and at home
  - developing younger pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they make, and older pupils' skills in understanding, and deducing, what they have read
  - making sure pupils' mental calculation skills are practised daily
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to solve problems and to apply them in other subjects
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use a wide range of language when writing for different audiences, and in different subjects, and to improve pupils' accuracy in spelling and punctuating sentences.
  
- Raise attendance and reduce persistent absence to at least the national averages, by:
  - enforcing strongly the school's recently introduced guidance to parents not to take holidays during term time
  - enhancing pupils' desire to attend school regularly through daily motivating and successful learning experiences.
  
- Reduce considerably the number of incidents of pupils' misbehaviour by ensuring that:
  - all staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and enforce consistently the school's behaviour policy.
  
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership, management and governance, by:

building a robust senior leadership team, and developing the skills of other teachers with responsibilities so that they can help to drive improvements in their areas

improving the tracking of pupils' progress so that the achievement of different groups of pupils can be identified more swiftly and the necessary actions taken to prevent them from falling behind

making sure that leaders and all staff fully understand what constitutes good and better progress for pupils given their individual starting points

checking more rigorously the quality of teaching and ensuring that feedback to staff about how to improve their teaching and pupils' learning is clearer, and acted upon

improving the governing body's knowledge of how well the school is doing, so that governors can hold leaders more rigorously to account for their performance.

An external review of governance and an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium was requested.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 November 2014.**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, undertook lesson observations, a joint work scrutiny of English and mathematics books with senior and subject leaders and scrutinised documents. They met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

### **Context**

There is a temporary supply teacher in Years 1/2 to cover for the absence of a member of staff. The school is following the due process to become a sponsored academy in March 2015.

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

Standards of achievement are starting to rise. By the end of Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard for combined attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above the floor targets. (These are the minimum standards set by the government.) The progress pupils made was lower than that seen nationally, but has improved on what was seen in 2013. Gaps in achievement remain for boys, lower-ability pupils and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have recognised this to be a school issue and have taken steps to address it.

Achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 was significantly below that seen nationally. Indications are that pupils did not make the expected progress because there has been weak teaching over time and pupils' starting points in Year 1 were, and still are, not accurately established by the school. Targets for the end of Years 1 and 2 need some revision in the light of this. Leaders have taken action to address underachievement through the strategic deployment of staff and targeted interventions.

The school says that children enter the early years with levels of development below those typically seen and make good progress. This year, the proportion of pupils entering at a typical level of development has increased, because the local authority is challenging schools about the accuracy of their baseline assessment. Leaders have taken this on board and have ensured that the baseline is more accurate than it may have been previously. This is helping teachers to raise their expectations of what children can do. The proportion of pupils leaving the early years with a good level of development in 2014 was above that seen nationally and is a notable improvement on what was seen in 2013.

Improvements in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) have led to a significant rise in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Pupils in Year 2 have caught up quickly. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done to ensure that pupils, particularly the least able and those who do not read regularly at home, have the opportunity to apply these skills and develop their understanding by reading more often and more widely.

Assessment information is increasingly accurate and reflects what was seen in pupils' work over time, because leaders have better systems and procedures for checking and make more robust checks. The local authority and the supporting school verify the school's judgements. The latest pupil performance information indicates an improving picture, but achievement across the school and subjects is variable. This is because the quality of teaching remains inconsistent. Where teaching is better, progress is accelerating. There is still much to do to close the gaps in achievement for the least able, including those with special educational needs, boys and disadvantaged pupils.

Further work needs to be done to secure accurate entry points for pupils in Year 1. The proportion leaving the early years at age-related expectations is higher than the starting points in Year 1 indicate. This means the school is lowering its expectation of pupils and this is a factor in achievement being significantly below expectations by the end of Key Stage 1.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving. Inadequate teaching has been reduced significantly, but not eradicated. A small proportion remains, but there is more teaching that is good. This is because teachers have had the appropriate training and support they needed and are being held to account more robustly by leaders.

Teaching strategies engage pupils better, although this is not consistent across classes and subjects. The introduction of the new curriculum, training and support has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils must do and can do. Teachers are expected to plan lessons with age-appropriate objectives and adapt to meet the needs of the least and most able. This approach is consistent across school, but some teachers do not always plan the right tasks. For instance, in mathematics there are missed opportunities to use practical resources to support pupils' understanding, particularly the least able, and there is an overreliance on the use of teaching assistants to support this group. Consequently, it is hard to tell if pupils truly understand what they are learning and doing. Scrutiny of pupils' work showed there was a lack of sequencing in teaching and learning to ensure good progress. There are not enough opportunities to deepen pupils' understanding and apply what they know to problem-solving. In addition, some teachers teach pupils methods of calculation without ensuring that pupils fully understand how numbers work and relate to each other, such as when using decomposition in subtraction or multiplying

decimals. Not all teachers are responding to pupils' misconceptions well enough when marking work to ensure that there are no gaps in learning before moving pupils on. This means that some pupils make the same errors in subsequent work.

The teaching of phonics has improved significantly. More pupils are developing the skills they need to tackle new words when reading. Despite this, teachers are not making the best use of time and resources to support the least able and those who do not read regularly at home. These pupils need to read more regularly to practise and apply their phonic skills and develop the fluency and confidence to read. More work needs to be done across the school to give pupils greater opportunities to read widely and often, so that they develop a love of reading and a deeper understanding of what they read.

Improvements in the teaching of writing are evident. There is a better understanding of what pupils need to learn and how. The content and sequencing of teaching is improving pupils' literacy skills and their ability to apply these to written work. However, there are not enough opportunities for them to apply their knowledge and skills to longer pieces of writing and to build up the stamina needed to write at length. Again, there is an overreliance on support from teaching assistants for the least able. Marking and feedback is used well in almost all classes to help pupils improve their work. Handwriting and presentation are improving.

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

Although behaviour has improved in the classroom, there is an urgent need to address behaviour in the playground at lunchtimes. Some of this negative behaviour is spilling into the classroom in the afternoon and affecting learning. The school's inclusion team is not effective in ensuring that pupils have a happy and safe experience in the playground at lunchtime by providing activities and games for pupils to play with, nor are playground buddies used effectively to promote positive relationships and interactions. Staff do not record incidents as meticulously as they need to. Although most pupils and parents say behaviour in the playground is improving slowly, some are still raising concerns about bullying and name-calling. Inspectors witnessed some incidents during the inspection. Leaders accepted inspection findings on day one and have taken immediate action to address the concerns raised. Although leaders check behaviour logs, which show a reduction in incidents, they need to check more regularly, through observation and discussion with pupils and parents, that the agreed systems and procedures are followed.

Behaviour in lessons is mainly, but not universally, good, because most teachers use the behaviour system well and teaching engages and interests pupils. In the small proportion of lessons seen where teaching was weaker, pupils disengaged and in one instance completed very little work. Generally, pupils are very positive about their lessons. They are taking greater pride in their work and respond positively to the marking teachers provide.

The school's inclusion team continues to work hard to secure improved attendance and, consequently, absence rates are falling.

The governing body meets statutory requirements for safeguarding, but would benefit from more governors being trained in safer recruitment.

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

The rapid and significant improvement in the leadership of the school is now a driving force for positive and effective changes in teaching. With support from Birkby Junior School, the team has quickly developed the skills and knowledge necessary to plan and take effective action, so much so that the headteacher was able to take a 'back seat' during the inspection and allow other leaders to work with inspectors. For instance, during a joint work scrutiny and joint lesson observations they were able to identify precisely the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and the impact of this on pupils' progress. They were able to discuss the next steps they would take, how and when.

Systems and procedures to support school improvement are much more robust. This means that leaders gather a more accurate view of the school's progress and the impact of their actions. They check more rigorously on the quality of teaching, promptly feed back to staff about how to improve, provide the appropriate training, support and challenge where needed and check again. This is resulting in the improved quality of teaching and better outcomes for pupils.

There is a better understanding of what constitutes good progress. Leaders have set more challenging targets for pupil progress, but need to refine these further so that their expectations of more experienced and better paid staff are even higher. These targets need to take account of gaps in achievement by stating what proportion of pupils are to make better than expected progress in order to catch up. Nevertheless, leaders are much more focused on underachieving groups. The special needs coordinator has taken decisive action to review and reduce the number of pupils on the special needs list and there is a much clearer understanding of the difference between underachievement and pupils who have an additional need. There is greater rigour in the way leaders gather evidence to identify underachievement and better systems and procedures for tackling this and checking on the impact of their actions.

Since the first monitoring inspection, leaders have worked on improving provision and the quality of teaching in the early years. This is resulting in better outcomes. They are aware of what more needs to be done and indications are that there is the capacity to do this.

New appointments to the governing body mean it is less weighted with staff members. These appointments have helped to fill gaps in the knowledge and skills

within the governing body. Steps have been taken to ensure that governors are in a better position to make checks on the school's progress, verify what leaders are saying and provide the challenge needed. Improved clerking arrangements mean there is better recording of this. The Chair and Vice-Chair of Governing Body know the school well. They have the passion and drive, as well as the knowledge and skills, to lead the governing body effectively.

The governing body produces an annual statement and review on the school's website, detailing the pupil premium spend and resulting impact. Given the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, governors must challenge leaders better on the impact of this spending.

The school is due to become a sponsored academy as part of a multi-academy trust on 1 March 2015. Leaders are working with the sponsor high school to ensure that there is a smooth transition.

### **External support**

The support provided by the local authority, in particular through the sterling work of the headteacher and staff at Birkby Junior School, has been invaluable in helping leaders to address the areas for improvement. This work has ensured the implementation of more rigorous systems and procedures to drive forward the improvements needed and ensured that the appropriate checks are made. The work undertaken with subject leaders has increased their knowledge, skills and confidence to lead and manage. This is starting to have an impact on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are making. An exit strategy should be considered to test how well leaders can sustain the improvements made and evaluate their capacity to secure further improvements.

The School Improvement Partner knows the school well. He makes regular checks on the progress the school is making, quality assures the support provided and provides the governing body with an external view of the school.