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9 July 2015

Mrs Michelle Hill
The Interim Headteacher
Leamore Primary School
Bloxwich Road
Walsall
WS3 2BB

Dear Mrs Hill

Special measures monitoring inspection of Leamore Primary School

Following my visit with Simon Mosley Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 8 July 2015, 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 fifth 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 newly qualified teachers before the next 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 fifth monitoring inspection on 8 July 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, five members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also observed playtimes, spoke with groups of pupils and talked to parents at the end of the school day.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection the headteacher has left the school. The deputy headteacher has become the interim headteacher and has appointed an interim deputy headteacher and an interim assistant headteacher from within the school. The Year 3 teacher left the school in April and has been replaced by a temporary supply teacher. Five teachers have been appointed to start in September, two of whom are newly qualified. The Chair of Governors has resigned and two Co-Chairs have taken over. Three new governors have been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Evidence from pupils' workbooks, from recent test results and teacher assessments and from the school's tracking information show that achievement continues to improve.

Children in Nursery and in the Reception class are making good, and in some cases outstanding, progress. This is because teaching is highly effective. The proportion of children reaching the expected level of development by the end of the Reception class has more than doubled since last year and is now above the national average.

The Year 1 pupils, who left Reception last year, well below the standards expected for their age, have caught up rapidly, particularly since the last inspection. The proportion that met the expected standard in the recent phonic check has increased from that seen in 2014 and is now just below the national average. The end of year teacher assessments for Year 2, which have been checked by the local authority, show that pupils have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion that has reached the expected level is just below the national average. This represents a significant improvement on last year. However, too few pupils reach the higher Level 3 in all three subjects.

At the end of Key Stage 2, results have also improved. This is because additional teachers have worked with small groups of Year 6 pupils to accelerate their progress.

The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading and writing is now in line with the national average. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the higher

Level 5 has improved substantially since 2014, it remains too low. In mathematics, improvements are evident; however, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level remains well below the national average. This is a priority for the school.

Progress across Key Stage 2 as a whole remains too variable.

The leaders were unable to provide coherent summary information about the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs because there is no one who has an overview of this area of school.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve. This is helping pupils to make faster progress than in the past and catch up with their peers in other schools.

Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding in early years and Key Stage 1. Teaching is characterised by fun and interesting activities that capture the interest and imagination of the pupils. Resources are meticulously prepared and carefully organised to meet the needs of the pupils. Routines and the expectations of behaviour and the quality and quantity of work are explicit, and adults have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils make at least good progress. Teachers' marking and feedback consistently follow the expectations set out by the school and are leading to pupils making improvements to their work.

Although teaching is improving, it remains less consistent in Key Stage 2, not only between classes but also between different subject areas. For example, presentation of work and adherence to the marking policy have improved in mathematics, but remain variable in other subjects. In addition, there are times when teachers give instructions and explanations that are too lengthy. This results in pupils losing concentration and becoming fidgety and unsettled.

There is consistency throughout the school in some areas. For example, positive relationships with adults can be seen in all classes. The learning environments and displays have improved. The reduction in clutter has increased the space for resources and displays that help the pupils to learn and celebrate their work. Pupils have noticed this and say that they like it and it helps them with their work. In addition, teaching assistants are used well to support pupils. This is because they have a clear focus and understand what pupils should learn in the time available. In pupils' workbooks, from all classes, it is clear that problem solving and real life mathematics are taking place much more frequently.

Throughout the school, opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English are not yet being maximised in all classes. This prevents pupils from being able to practice what they have learned and hone their skills.

The teaching for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is too variable. This is because there is currently no strategic leadership in this area.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Leaders have been successful in creating an increasingly calm and purposeful environment. Typically, behaviour in classrooms is well managed and pupils respond quickly to adults' instructions. Attitudes to learning are positive because teaching is improving and lessons are increasingly stimulating. Pupils are keen to welcome visitors to the school and confident to talk about their learning.

The interim headteacher has reinforced high expectations of behaviour and made changes to the way that sanctions are imposed. This has been done with the support of the local authority. As a result, the number of fixed term exclusions has increased since the last inspection. These are appropriate. School leaders are aware that this is a short term measure and as expectations are reinforced this should decrease. A range of external agencies has been consulted to support the small number of pupils who demonstrate particularly challenging behaviour. As a result, these pupils, and their teachers have access to a broader range of support than in the past. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour has improved noticeably recently. They say that this is because the interim headteacher is 'strict but fair'. They say, 'We know where we stand.'

Younger pupils show good self-control when moving from their classroom to the assembly hall and sit patiently for other pupils to arrive. However, the same cannot be said for the older pupils who have an overly relaxed attitude when they enter the assembly hall – chatting to one another and not setting a good example to the younger pupils. This is because not all adults have the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour during assembly times.

Pupils are vigilant about issues related to safety. For example, during the inspection, pupils asked inspectors to show their visitor badges to prove that they had signed in properly.

Attendance continues to improve slowly, but remains below the national average. A high number of pupils are late for school. This is an area where rapid improvement is required.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The interim headteacher has taken swift and decisive action since her appointment in May. She has an accurate view of what needs to be done and is tackling issues with a sense of urgency. As a result, the pace of improvement has been accelerated. She has appointed interim leaders and they have quickly become a cohesive, hardworking and determined team. In a short space of time they have effected a number of improvements. The learning environments have become brighter, fresher and clutter free. They have resolved ongoing staffing issues to ensure that all vacant posts are filled for September. The interim headteacher has gained the respect of the staff and galvanised them into taking more rapid action. Staff who spoke to

inspectors reported that senior leaders are increasingly approachable and effective, especially with regard to pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour. They also stated that communication has improved with the introduction of weekly briefings and 'the ethos of the school is positive and energised'. Staff morale has improved as a result. Parents are equally positive about the changes in the school. One summed it up saying, 'There is a new buzz around the school.'

The newly appointed mathematics leader has made thorough checks on the pupils' workbooks and has provided teachers with clear and precise feedback. As a result, the marking in mathematics books has improved.

The Key Stage 1 and early years leader has provided highly effective support for her team. As a result, teaching is consistently good, and often outstanding, and pupils' progress has accelerated significantly from that seen in the past. She is an excellent role model with high expectations of herself, her team and the pupils.

A leader in charge of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has been appointed from within the staff for September and has begun a comprehensive training programme. However, at the time of the inspection, there was no leader in charge of this area of the school. As a result, provision for, and oversight of, these pupils is inadequate.

Under the leadership of the new co-chairs of governors, governance continues to improve. The structure of meetings has been reorganised to ensure that time is used more productively. Minutes from meetings and email exchanges show that governors have a good grasp on the issues facing the school. As a result, a higher level of challenge is evident. Governors' visits have a precise focus, allowing them to glean detailed information. For example, governors recently took part in a scrutiny of mathematics books. When vacancies arise on the governing body, more strategic action is being taken to recruit governors who have the competencies required as identified in the recent skills audit. For example, a recently appointed governor has a background in special educational needs provision.

External support

The local authority acted quickly and decisively to appoint an interim headteacher. The two local authority advisers have provided frequent and effective support to enable the interim headteacher and the new chairs of governors to hit the ground running.