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Mrs Victoria Saville
Principal
Fieldhead Primary Academy
Charlotte Close
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Dear Mrs Saville

Special measures monitoring inspection of Fieldhead Primary Academy

Following my visit to your school on 21–22 March 2017, 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 that have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in July 2016.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the task group, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kate Rowley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in July 2016.

- Urgently improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all new initiatives are sustained consistently well across the whole school
 - making sure that identified weaknesses in the quality of teaching are followed up swiftly with the necessary rigour to ensure that rapid improvements are made and sustained
 - consistently using systems, such as pupil progress meetings, to effectively hold teachers robustly to account for the progress that pupils make
 - ensuring that subject leaders in mathematics and English play a greater role in bringing about rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects
 - taking care to listen to the views of all those associated with the school so that leaders are sure that their actions are having an immediate impact on eradicating racist name-calling and bullying
 - making sure that those responsible for governance bring about rapid improvements by holding leaders stringently to account
 - using extra funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to narrow the gap in achievement to other pupils nationally.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and in so doing improve the progress of all groups of pupils across the school by:
 - ensuring that all teachers and teaching assistants have the very highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making certain that all pupils, including the most able, are given work that matches their ability and challenges them to think more deeply
 - checking that all teachers use the school's marking and feedback policy to support pupils to understand how to get better
 - ensuring that pupils understand precisely what is expected of them and what they need to do to succeed in every lesson
 - making sure that all learning support assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning
 - giving pupils more opportunities to apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills to their writing
 - making sure that teachers only accept the very best work from pupils.
- Urgently improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - eradicating the high frequency of racist name-calling in the school
 - ensuring that incidents of bullying reduce rapidly

- making sure that the incidence of low-level disruptive behaviour within the classroom continues to reduce
- reducing the proportion of pupils who are absent from school so that it is at least in line with the national average.
- Improve children’s achievement in the early years so that they are better equipped with the skills necessary for their learning in Year 1 by:
 - making sure that assessments of what children can do are used consistently and effectively by teachers to plan learning activities that develop essential skills
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is equally strong across Nursery and Reception
 - giving children frequent opportunities to develop their language and communication skills.

An external review of how pupil premium funding is spent should be undertaken to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 March 2017

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal and vice-principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, representatives from the task group including the chair, representatives from the trust and the school business manager. Learning in classrooms was observed alongside the principal, and the inspector looked at some examples of pupils' work. The inspector spoke to the local authority representative on the telephone and considered the views of parents in a recent questionnaire sent out by the school.

Context

A task group had been established in place of a local governing body in March 2015. This was strengthened in September 2016 with new members from the trust. A new vice-principal joined the academy in September 2016 from a school within the trust. A member of staff has been appointed as an acting assistant principal responsible for the leadership of inclusion. This temporary contract is due to be reviewed in the summer term. Since the last inspection, five of the eight teaching staff have left and new staff have been appointed. Recently, one of the new staff has resigned and the recruitment for this role is under way. One teacher is on maternity leave.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The principal and new vice-principal have a clear and honest view of how much needs to be done to improve outcomes for pupils. They display resilience, positivity and determination to lead staff through this improvement journey.

Intense support and challenge from the trust has been fundamental in effective actions being taken towards improvement. A strong partnership exists between the school and the trust. The role of the trust's school improvement partners has been invaluable in providing support where it is needed most: in developing leaders at all levels; providing guidance and training to improve teaching; working with leaders to robustly check teaching, learning and assessment; providing training for learning support assistants and identifying actions for further development.

The trust's statement of action is fit for purpose. It has provided the foundations of the school's improvement plan. This sets out strategic actions and identifies the right priorities for improvement. There are clearly identified strategies for frequently checking progress and reporting this back to staff as well as school and trust leaders. Personnel who will check actions and evaluate impact are defined, though this needs to be further improved in subject area action plans.

The task group has a strong and varied skill set. Clear, concise documentation demonstrates robust evidence of the challenge the task group poses to leaders about all aspects of school improvement and specifically that of outcomes for pupils. Members of the task group visit school regularly to see first-hand the action leaders and staff are taking.

The review of the use of the pupil premium funding took place in the autumn term. The pupil premium leader has a strong understanding of the current picture for disadvantaged pupils and the rigour that is needed to improve progress in all subjects. Clear actions are in place, but it is too early to tell the academic impact of these. However, work under way to support pupils in understanding and managing their emotions and behaviours is already bearing fruit: attitudes to learning are much more positive.

Middle leaders are developing their confidence and skill in leading their area of improvement. They have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and know that they need to further support and challenge staff to ensure that these changes happen.

There has been a clear focus on settling challenging behaviour, including incidents of bullying and racism. School records and simply walking around the school environment show that this is the area of work that has had a tangible impact.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is not consistently good across school. However, turbulence in staffing is settling down. The staff team feel clear about leaders' higher expectations in all aspects of school life and are positive about the support available to help them improve their teaching. They have bought in to the challenging, but purposeful, journey the school is on.

New approaches to support consistency in stronger teaching and learning have been well thought out and these are in place in all classrooms. However, there is variability in how these are applied and the systems are not yet embedded in either the teachers' practice or the pupils' application. Therefore, pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils, is not consistently improved and underperformance remains.

Assessment systems and frequent checking of the progress pupils are making are helping teachers plan work which better addresses pupils' needs. Direction from the vice-principal in planning lessons and modelling high-quality learning is aiding improvement and is well received by teachers and support staff.

The work of many pupils shows improved presentation in response to higher expectations, but this is an area which is not consistent. Pupils' better attitudes to learning mean that they are keener to do their best and they have a clearer view of what is expected of them. Pupils' talk around learning can still be stilted and some pupils find it hard to answer questions about their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have rightly addressed the concerns around behaviour, bullying and racism as a matter of urgency.

The drive to deliver a high level of support for pupils' personal development and welfare comes through strongly. The complex needs and challenging behaviour of some pupils are being addressed with care, positivity and a calm, firm approach. The inclusion team is making a positive difference to school life for pupils who have very different needs. A wealth of strategies are in place to engage pupils in their learning and enable them to access the whole curriculum. The nurture and real life skill development opportunities for these pupils are making a sustainable difference to their learning and that of others around them.

Pupils speak about their view of racism. They believe that there was not a good enough understanding around this before but that now incidents do not occur as often. School records support this view.

Pupils' confidence around the eradication of bullying is not as strong. The school has put in place a number of support mechanisms to address this for individuals, as well as regular whole-school and class teaching to build pupils' awareness. Leaders agree that more work needs to be done on promoting the positive changes taking place and to build a more sustainable culture of belonging, kindness and respect.

The number of exclusions is still high. Leaders are confident that their zero tolerance approach is starting to have an impact and that staff's high expectations alongside the strong pastoral support from the inclusion team will reduce these incidents longer term.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' outcomes remain weak across key stage 1 and key stage 2 because of a legacy of underperformance. A considerable proportion of pupils are working below, and in some classes well below, national expectations across the school. A very small minority are working at higher standards. Progress from pupils' starting points remains poor; it is particularly slow for the disadvantaged and the most able pupils.

Leaders are clear that raising outcomes for pupils is the bread and butter of the school's work. Improvement plans and resulting actions are focused on raising achievement in reading, writing and mathematics and have started with a series of non-negotiable elements. In reading, some impact can be seen: pupils generally show enjoyment of books and reading through the day is high profile. Work in phonics is supporting pupils well in starting to read with more fluency. Additional activities, such as the lunchtime readers club, are helping to create a positive vibe around the sharing of books. Leaders have established enjoyment of reading first as they feel that these experiences will promote skill development in writing. In mathematics, building basic number skills and a consistency around the teaching of calculations have been the primary focus. The impact of this work can be seen in most classes but leaders are aware that there is a long way to go to plug the gaps in learning, particularly for the older pupils.

The work of children in the early years shows that progress has begun to accelerate. Children's application of phonics skills in their reading and writing in

particular show improvement. This is due to adults planning focused tasks and high-quality opportunities for structured play which promote learning in basic skills as well as all other areas of the curriculum. Positive and careful modelling and high expectations from adults are resulting in better behaviour from children in the early years.

External support

External support has been quickly secured and is building a foundation for improvement.

The trust has ensured that a raft of support is in place, centred on improving leadership and teaching and learning. This constitutes frequent improvement partner visits, consultant support for specific subjects, training for teachers and support staff, and rigorous checking and evaluation. A key area supporting improvement, and mentioned positively by staff and leaders, is the effective links that have been made with other schools in the trust. Partnerships locally have enabled staff to see strong practice, working alongside colleagues in other schools. Visits to a trust school in a neighbouring region have enabled all staff to see a variety of ways of tackling different challenges.

The local authority has contributed to the improvement agenda by giving support and challenge through termly visits to review progress. It is mindful that when several different bodies are involved in improvement, messages may vary. It has signposted leaders to successful schools or those that have been through similar challenge and improved, as well as ensuring that the principal is aware of the networks and support that are available.