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4 July 2017

Mrs Victoria Saville  
Principal  
Fieldhead Primary Academy  
Charlotte Close  
Birstall  
Batley  
West Yorkshire  
WF17 9BX

Dear Mrs Saville

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Fieldhead Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Ella Besharati, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 13–14 June 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in July 2016. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

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

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 second monitoring inspection on 13 to 14 June 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, vice-principal, acting assistant principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, staff and the school business manager. The lead inspector met with members of the task group, who operate as a governing body, including the chairperson and representatives from the trust. Learning in classrooms was observed alongside the principal and acting assistant principal. The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work across the curriculum. Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, around school and in the playground. The lead inspector spoke to parents who attended the school's parents' forum.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, one teacher has left. A supply teacher is covering this class until the end of the summer term. Two teaching appointments have been made for September 2017 with strong support from the trust. A reduction in expressions of interest for Nursery means that children will be able to access Nursery for mornings only from September 2017.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The leadership team has continued to build on the strengths seen at the first monitoring visit. There is a strong partnership between school leaders, the task group and the trust. Leaders bring different skills to the table to form an able team who instil confidence in the staff.

The principal and vice-principal are leading the staff team successfully in building a culture of belonging and ambition. The raised expectations of all staff are apparent as soon as you enter the school. The environment is calm, welcoming, celebratory and industrious.

School and trust leaders, along with the task group, know the school very well. Their self-evaluation, based on a plenitude of gathered information, is a true reflection of where the school is now. The revised improvement plan is clear, concise and focused on the right priorities. There is an ongoing record of when aspects of the plan are checked. Evaluations, or directions to evaluative records, sit comprehensively alongside the plan. Consequently, all staff and leaders are crystal clear about the plans of action for improvement, how progress against these actions will be checked and the impact of this work so far.

Middle leadership has developed well since the last visit. Middle leaders have strong subject knowledge. Their own professional development and work with other schools has enabled them to develop their leadership skills successfully and built

their confidence in supporting staff.

Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are frequent and well planned. Leaders focus on checking on the right aspects of teaching and learning. Their analysis of teaching and learning is accurate and rigorous. They give high-quality, explicit written and verbal feedback to teachers, which means that everyone knows what to do next to improve.

Leaders have swiftly put in place support for teachers and teaching assistants to help them to tackle the significant gaps in pupils' learning that exist. Many staff are relatively new to teaching or new to the school this year. The vice-principal has given intense support to specific year groups and the positive impact on the progress pupils are making is clear to see in the pupils' work and in the teachers' confidence. Leaders know that there is still much work to do in this area.

The trust support continues to be thorough and effective. It includes frequent visits from the improvement partner, training provided centrally, support in resourcing staffing and regular work with other schools across the trust. The improvement partner works with school leaders in gathering pertinent information about pupils' progress through lesson visits, work scrutiny and speaking to pupils about their learning. When any underperformance or inefficiency in systems is spotted, she quickly works with school leaders to find ways to improve these aspects. The additional staffing support from the trust in September will allow the vice-principal to increase the effective support she is giving to teachers and teaching assistants to improve pupils' outcomes.

Assessment systems give a comprehensive view of pupils' work against national expectations. Leaders agree that where a substantial proportion of pupils are working below the standards expected, further refinement and detail of progress is needed to give a clearer view of steps of improvement across the year. For example, leaders' work in putting in place effective support for disadvantaged pupils, after the pupil premium review, is successfully supporting improved progress. However, the assessment system does not clearly illustrate this progress across the year.

Leaders and teachers have rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics so that pupils meet the expected standards. More pupils are starting to reach these standards across the school, although in some year groups there has been less focus on the most able pupils and these pupils do not do as well as they could. Leaders are now starting to develop a broader curriculum. Work in science, history and geography has begun. Opportunities in the arts are more limited.

The early years leader has an obvious enthusiasm for her role. She is open and receptive to advice. She wants the very best for the children in her care. She and

the early years team have ensured that thorough assessment and a good understanding of the next steps children need to take are supporting children in making improved progress. She agrees that developing opportunities for children to practise their skills in the outdoors will extend and embed learning in the basic skills as well as across the whole curriculum.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Considerable changes in staffing have now stabilised. There is a real sense of working purposefully together. Staff understand the need for rigour in checks on the quality of teaching. They are open to advice about how to continually improve their practice.

In writing, work to build pupils' skills to produce a final high-quality piece of writing is starting to come through in their written work. Checklists help pupils to see what they have achieved and what they need to do next to improve their work. Pupils are applying punctuation and grammar more successfully to their work. There is a good balance of short, skills-based work and extended pieces of writing where pupils apply these skills. Some inconsistencies in the presentation and overall quality of work still remain. There is also variability in the opportunities pupils have to edit and improve their own work.

Standards in phonics are starting to rise steadily. However, phonics teaching is not systematic enough or tightly focused enough to ensure that more pupils reach the standards expected in the Year 1 screening check. Teachers do not consistently use phonetic sounds, so pupils do not learn and apply these correctly.

In mathematics, work is more appropriately directed by teachers to the national expectations. Pupils' skills in mental arithmetic are improving. A structure for pupils to check the success of their work and move on to further challenge is starting to be applied consistently across classes. Leaders agree that further refinement is needed to check that pupils of all abilities have regular opportunities to reason and to apply their skills. For example, the lower-ability pupils sometimes do not have the same opportunity to apply their skills to solve problems. The most able pupils, in particular, are not always given work that is well matched to their needs.

Teachers agree that moderating work with other schools in the trust is quality-assuring their work, as well as developing their confidence in assessing work against the national expectations.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

There is an overwhelming response from pupils that behaviour is improving. Pupils speak with pride about their school. There is excitement around the prestige of awards, such as Fabulous Fieldheaders. Most notable on this visit was the difference in pupils' confidence to talk about their learning. Pupils know why they are set tasks, what the intended outcomes are and what they are working on improving. They talk about their enjoyment of the learning taking place and are eager to share their successes.

Leaders have developed a culture of belonging and are developing a sense of pride of being part of Fieldhead Primary Academy among pupils, staff and parents. The school's motto, 'Together we succeed', is being used to steer good attitudes to learning and better outcomes for all.

Parents and pupils say that bullying incidents have reduced. School records confirm that racist incidents are now rare. Parents say that there is better communication and a clearer understanding around what to do if pupils are being bullied or are the bullies. Pupils have confidence in staff supporting them in making the right choices. They say that they want to treat each other with kindness and respect and that they help each other to make sure this happens.

In the early years, children are kind and considerate to each other. For example, they take turns when checking holiday brochures and planning holiday destinations. Their attitudes to learning are positive and they engage willingly in the tasks they are set.

Leaders' focus on improving attendance is starting to have a positive impact. Attendance figures across the first part of the year show definite improvement. Family holidays are affecting some of the summer term figures, although attendance overall has improved to nearer the national average.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school is still working hard to address historical underperformance and gaps in learning. The proportion of pupils working within standards typical for their age is increasing steadily in English and mathematics. The difference between pupils at Fieldhead and others nationally remains, but is diminishing. There are very few pupils working at higher standards.

The progress of specific groups of pupils is still a priority. Leaders for disadvantaged pupils and for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have a good understanding of these pupils' needs and any barriers they have to their learning. Leaders and staff have substantially improved emotional and behavioural outcomes for these pupils. The leader for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities knows that she now needs to support staff in addressing the significantly lower progress these pupils have made in English and mathematics.

Disadvantaged pupils are generally making steady progress, but this needs to be accelerated to more rapidly diminish the difference between the attainment of these pupils and their peers. School and trust leaders agree that further refining their assessment systems will support a better understanding of the progress these pupils make throughout the year.

### **External support**

School leaders are very willing to seek external guidance and support in their journey of improvement. They continue to work with personnel in the trust and beyond to put their plans into action and secure improvement.

Most support received is through the trust, including partnerships with other schools within the trust. Support from the trust is rigorous. It includes financial support as well as support to improve leadership and teaching and learning. Work with other schools is commented on very positively by school staff, who appreciate these opportunities to share good practice with colleagues in other schools. The principal also accesses support and training from the local authority when appropriate. This is useful in keeping up to date with current information and consulting with leaders in other schools.