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3 October 2017

Miss Rachel Pars  
Headteacher  
Elton Community Primary School  
Alston Street  
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Lancashire  
BL8 1SB

Dear Miss Pars

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Elton Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 20–21 September 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 March 2017.

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 action 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 governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bury. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mark Quinn  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.**

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school to enable all pupils to make good or better progress by:
  - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of pupils' progress and outcomes
  - improving teachers' subject knowledge so that they are able to show and explain concepts well
  - planning lessons that engage and interest pupils
  - assessing pupils' understanding throughout lessons and adapting teaching where needed
  - ensuring that teachers' explanations and the activities set are appropriately challenging for pupils with different abilities
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length and showing pupils how to structure their writing
  - ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to explain their reasoning and use and apply their mathematical skills
  - improving the quality of provision in the early years by ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to develop their number, writing and personal social skills.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by:
  - rapidly improving the impact of leaders in improving the quality of teaching and learning
  - ensuring that the pupil premium grant is appropriately and effectively spent to rapidly raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
  - developing the quality of middle leadership so that subject leaders contribute fully to improving teaching and standards in their subject area
  - using performance management more rigorously to hold staff to account for pupils' progress and their leadership responsibilities
  - improving the impact of governors in challenging leaders to bring about rapid improvement
  - increasing pupils' attendance and reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent by engaging parents more effectively
  - ensuring that assessment procedures are robust, leaders identify any underachievement and support programmes are sharp and effective in raising attainment

- developing current initiatives to improve overall effectiveness of the school so that all pupils make good progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 20 September 2017 to 21 September 2017**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, the lead inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, who is also the early years leader, a selection of subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and other members of staff. He held a discussion by telephone with the chair of governors and met with other governors. He held a discussion with the chair of the trust board and one other member. He also had a discussion with the executive director of education of the trust, who has been supporting the headteacher. He met with 10 pupils to discuss changes since the previous inspection. He carried out short visits to the early years and all year groups in key stage 1 and key stage 2, which were joint activities with the headteacher. He scrutinised a range of documentation, including the trust's statement of action and the school's plan for improvement, records of incidents of bullying and misbehaviour, minutes of meetings of the governing body and records connected with the safeguarding of children. He analysed pupils' work and the school's own assessment information.

### **Context**

There have been several changes in staffing and the senior leadership team since the last inspection. An assistant headteacher, seconded to the school in April 2017, has been deputy headteacher since September 2017. There is now an assistant headteacher overseeing the early years and there is a new special educational needs coordinator. In total, there have been six new appointments since the previous inspection.

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

The trust, the governing body and the headteacher have acted promptly and decisively to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The headteacher has challenged underperformance effectively.

The trust's statement of action fulfils requirements and remains fit for purpose, as it was when one of Her Majesty's Inspectors evaluated it in May 2017. The school's action plan is also fit for purpose. It is thorough and contains actions that are relevant to the areas that need improvement and now contains clearer information about who is monitoring and evaluating the impact of those actions. However, the plan would benefit from measureable or observable success criteria that are more precisely linked to pupils' achievement.

Leaders were quick to commission external reviews of governance and of the use of the pupil premium funding. The school has responded to the recommendations of

these reviews swiftly and action plans are in place. Evidence indicates that there has been a rapid change in practice, such as the appointment of a pupil premium coordinator and a more stringent approach by governors to holding senior leaders to account. The impact of these recommendations on pupils' achievement is not yet evident, however, as there has not been enough time to see strong progress among the current groups of pupils.

The headteacher has begun an energetic and determined strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. She has, for example, introduced a more structured approach to planning and has established 'non-negotiables', such as a consistent expectation of displays in classrooms, ensuring that they support pupils' learning. There are now regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress, with senior leaders holding teachers to account more rigorously for their class's achievement.

The inspector spoke with members of the trust board and with governors. They expressed a clear ambition to bring about rapid improvement at the school and were fully supportive of the headteacher's robust challenge to unacceptable performance. They stated that their intention is to be able to evaluate the school as good by the end of the current academic year.

In discussion with the inspector, members of staff expressed support for the changes that have taken place and are as ambitious as senior leaders to see the school make speedy progress. They are well aware of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection and feel that there are already some signs of improvement, such as in pupils' attitudes and behaviour, but recognise that it will take time to establish the recent changes to teaching and learning practices.

Although senior leaders have shown passion and determination to succeed, they recognise there are still areas for improvement that require attention. For example, leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics still have an underdeveloped appreciation of the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. Senior leaders plan to address this in the coming term.

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

The headteacher and her senior leaders have been unflagging in their efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher has deployed staff to make the most of their strengths. Teachers have embraced the new expectations of classroom practice, such as the introduction of 'learning journeys' in children's workbooks with stepped tasks that teachers provide to ensure that there is an appropriate match between the work and pupils' ability. Evidence from short visits to classes also revealed teachers who had high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils who had positive attitudes and lost little learning time. The group of pupils with whom the inspector spoke said that they find their work challenging and 'fun'. One pupil even said that teachers 'give you work to your standard'.

Leaders acknowledge, however, that it is too soon to see strong progress resulting from the recent changes in practice. For example, teachers still need to enable pupils to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics, regardless of their ability. Also, although there is now improved structure to the teaching of writing, the quality of the work produced is not yet high enough.

The headteacher has recently revised the school's assessment system for English and mathematics so as to secure greater accuracy and consistency, ensuring that teachers will have a clearer picture of pupils' progress. However, the system is still in its infancy and its impact is as yet unclear.

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

Leaders have taken steps to improve attendance. They have introduced a number of new strategies, including termly updates for class teachers to enable them to take greater responsibility for checking on their pupils' attendance and punctuality. There are weekly assemblies that include celebrations of pupils' good attendance. Leaders are also considering the introduction of fines for parents of children who have persistent or unauthorised absences.

Overall attendance for 2017 is slightly improved on the figure for 2016. However, persistent absences are still high, as the strategies have not had time to take effect. Leaders recognise this and are determined to continue with their efforts.

Although behaviour was not a weakness identified at the last inspection, leaders decided to take action to strengthen it in order to underpin the improvements in teaching and learning that they needed to secure. They have revised the school's behaviour policy to achieve this. The inspector observed behaviour in class that was conducive to pupils' engagement with the tasks teachers set and there was very little loss of learning time. As the inspector moved about the school, pupils typically demonstrated good conduct. These are indications that the new policy is starting to have a positive effect.

In conversation with the inspector, pupils revealed they feel safe and that staff look after them well. They have regular lessons in how to stay safe online and know about different types of bullying. They said that bullying is very rare and they expressed confidence that teachers would manage it well if it happened.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Leaders at all levels agree that progress is still too slow to indicate that their new strategies and actions are having enough impact. Some changes have taken place as recently as September 2017, so not enough time has elapsed to be able to judge that they are effective.

Unvalidated assessment information for 2017 for key stage 1 and key stage 2 shows

that pupils' achievement in most aspects of English and mathematics across all groups has declined since 2016 and is below the levels of similar pupils nationally. However, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 who achieved the expected standard in phonics was well above the national average. In Year 6, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard or above in mathematics was also above the national average. The proportion of pupils in Year 6 who achieved the expected standard in writing was still below the national average but had improved on the school's result for 2016.

Books, including last year's, show an overall picture of progress that is too slow, with not enough pupils acquiring the knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to their age and ability. Current work is necessarily scant and, although it shows increased consistency in its structure, it has yet to show that pupils are making rapid progress.

### **External support**

The trust's executive director of education took up post at about the same time as the headteacher. They have worked closely together since the last inspection, especially in the area of challenging the underperformance of staff. The executive director has also arranged opportunities to work with good and outstanding schools in order to train staff and allow them to learn from examples of strong practice. She has been gradually reducing her level of involvement as the headteacher becomes increasingly confident in managing the necessary changes to secure improvement. The actions she has taken are clearly appropriate to the needs of the school, but, as with other aspects of the school's provision, it is still too soon to see the impact.

Leaders have secured some services from the local authority as part of a service level agreement. This includes the services of a local authority attendance officer to support the school's work on reducing absenteeism.