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Miss Susan Dawson
Southmere Primary Academy
Ewart Street
Bradford
West Yorkshire
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Dear Miss Dawson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Southmere Primary Academy

Following my visit with Mary Lanovy-Taylor, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 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 November 2016.

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

Leaders and managers are not 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 interim executive board, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jo Sharpe

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve leadership and governance by:
 - clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the trust, school leaders and governors so that everyone understands their role and to whom they are accountable
 - creating an effective plan to support rapid school improvement that clearly identifies priorities, who will lead and monitor each action, when this will happen, and how progress will be checked
 - carefully and regularly checking the progress pupils are making from their starting points
 - devising a broad and engaging curriculum that will effectively develop pupils' basic skills, knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects
 - ensuring that middle leaders know precisely what aspects of their subjects need to improve and that they hold teachers to account for the progress their pupils are making
 - ensuring that teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach subjects at greater depth.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' outcomes improve, by:
 - making sure that assessment information is accurate and used carefully to check that each pupil is making at least good progress
 - gaining a good understanding of the expectations of the curriculum, particularly the expectations in English and mathematics at higher levels
 - making sure that pupils apply their improved phonics skills when reading and are helped to deepen their understanding of the books they read
 - ensuring that pupils' reasoning and problem solving in mathematics are developed through the application of taught skills.
- Improve outcomes for children in the early years by:
 - increasing the opportunity and time they have to learn outdoors, particularly for children in Nursery
 - further developing the outdoor areas to promote and encourage children to learn, practise and develop their basic skills throughout the day.
- Work effectively with parents to improve attendance, particularly for the more vulnerable pupils.

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 use of 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 26 and 27 September 2017

Evidence

The inspectors carefully considered those aspects of the school's work that were identified for improvement at the last inspection. Meetings took place with the principal, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, the director of primary academies, the chair of the interim executive board and both vice-principals. The inspectors also met with groups of pupils and asked them for their opinions about teaching and learning, and behaviour. We also discussed their work in books and listened to them read. Many more pupils were spoken to at breaktimes and, when appropriate, in lessons.

Context

Since the last inspection, there has been significant change in both the leadership team and the teaching team at the school. The principal is new to role from September 2017. A new vice-principal joined the senior leadership team in April 2017 and a special educational needs coordinator in June 2017. They work alongside the existing vice-principal. There are currently no middle leaders in school. Three members of the teaching staff left the school following the last inspection, as did the headteacher. A further five members of the teaching staff, along with the executive headteacher, left the school in the summer term 2017. Five newly qualified teachers joined the school in September 2017. The trust has replaced the governing body with an interim executive board (IEB). There have also been changes to leadership roles within Northern Education Trust with the appointment of a new CEO from September 2017.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders and managers have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to bring about improvement since the school's inspection in November 2016. The trust has not been effective in supporting the school in using staff within the trust or external consultants they have commissioned. Leaders at all levels have not been monitored carefully enough to ensure that their actions have quickly led to school improvement. Too long has been taken to secure any improvement, so currently, the school is unlikely to be removed from special measures in the required timescale. The newly established leadership team in school consider that its members now have clearly defined roles. However, they are as yet very new to role and are not effectively being held to account.

The new principal and CEO of the trust are acutely aware that improvement since the last inspection has not been good enough and they have an accurate view of what needs to improve. The CEO has clear strategic and operational plans and the new principal has created a short-term action plan which has identified weaknesses and actions to address them. Although parts of this plan have been implemented,

many issues have yet to be addressed. These new leaders have not yet had the time, since September 2017, to demonstrate their impact on school improvement. The trust's initial action plan identified actions to bring about improvement. However, previous inaccurate reviews and assessment materials have rendered the action plan ineffective.

Evaluations of teaching and learning across the school have been over optimistic and areas for development not clearly identified. Teachers have not been successful in improving the quality of their teaching following support and guidance received. Senior leaders within the school have not modelled high-quality teaching so that others can follow their example.

Accurate information on pupils' starting points and attainment from those points is still not available. The new leaders are in the process of introducing a new tracking system which they anticipate will give a clearer and accurate picture of the progress and attainment pupils are making. It is also anticipated that this information, alongside evaluations of teaching, will hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. A new risk banding system has been introduced to track whether Year 6 pupils are on target to reach standards that are expected for their age. The system does not clearly follow those pupils who could achieve at greater depth.

The trust commissioned a review of pupil premium funding following the last inspection. However, the review was found to be inaccurate. Another review was commissioned, but has not yet been completed. Leaders have not ensured that this review has been completed in a timely fashion or that it has been successful in ensuring that funding for pupil premium pupils is being used effectively.

The trust took the decision not to complete a review of governance and chose to create an interim executive board (IEB). There has been some challenge and support from the chair of the IEB. However, confusion over roles and responsibilities has limited the effectiveness of this.

All aspects of safeguarding are thorough. Appropriate checks are made on all staff and visitors to ensure that pupils are safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and parents consider that their children are safe in school. Neither this nor the previous inspection raised any concerns around safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has not improved since the previous inspection. Concerns and areas for improvement previously identified have not been addressed. Leaders have not tackled the lack of accurate information on pupils' attainment. Teachers are not therefore using assessment information to track pupils' progress from their starting points. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are still too low. Too many pupils are involved in completing tasks without any valuable learning taking place. Teachers' poor modelling of

appropriate vocabulary and language hinders pupils' progress and means that too often pupils are repeating errors in the spoken and written word. Although all work in books is reviewed by adults, they do not help pupils to understand how they can improve their learning. A commercial reading scheme has been introduced to help support the acquisition of reading and writing skills for younger pupils. Some teachers help pupils to gain a good understanding of blending letter sounds, grammar and the use of punctuation. This, and a good range of up-to-date literature are helping pupils to make slightly better progress in reading. Pupils like their teachers and comment on how much they help them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The number of pupil absences remains high compared with that of other pupils nationally. Behaviour at breaktimes is sometimes boisterous and noisy, with some pupils worried about being knocked over. Pupils comment that there is nothing to do at breaktimes. There is very little equipment and adults do not encourage pupils to play organised games. Pupils who receive support on an individual basis build good relationships with the adults who look after them. Pupils work well in lessons and move around the school in an orderly manner as they follow adult direction well. However, this direction means that they have little opportunity to be responsible for their own behaviour or allowed to show initiative. Pupils are kind to each other and welcoming to visitors. They proudly talk of their school and how they enjoy being with their friends in school. Pupils attending breakfast club are cared for well. They are safely recorded as being present and then get to choose from a range of healthy snacks and interesting activities. When pupils are engaged in learning and activities they enjoy, such as singing in assembly and attending breakfast club, they behave impeccably.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' academic outcomes are still too low. There has been some improvement in achievement in reading for pupils in Year 6 in 2017. However, standards across the school remain low and progress slow. Pupils are beginning to show better skills in decoding words. However, direction from adults is not clear enough to help pupils to learn at a faster pace. Work in books shows that pupils are not learning at the depth of which they are capable because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve is generally too low. Misconceptions and errors are being repeated as teachers are not identifying them and consequently pupils' attainment remains low.

Early years

Teachers in early years have lacked guidance and support since the last inspection to help them improve the provision for these young children more rapidly. Children are not as independent as they could be because adults do not encourage them to be responsible for their own resources. At times, this can affect learning because planned activities are not accessible for the next child who comes along.

Children are happy and enjoy the wide range of activities on offer, both inside and outside. The large outside area is now available to children for most of the day and children are beginning to access more areas of learning outside. Adults regularly interact well with children as they play alongside them, acting as good role models and helping children learn. Children mix together agreeably and develop their communication skills well as they chat about the activities in which they are engaging.

External support

A director of the trust acknowledged that the trust does not have the capacity from within to effectively support this school's improvement. The trust commissioned support from external sources to do this. However, this external support has been ineffective. External evaluations have been found to be over optimistic and there was concern in the trust that findings were not accurate. External support has not led to school improvement.