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28 December 2017

Mrs Victoria Saville
Principal
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Charlotte Close
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Dear Mrs Saville

Special measures monitoring inspection of Fieldhead Primary Academy

Following my visit with Marianne Young, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 6–7 December 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 third 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.

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 chief executive officer of Focus Academy Trust, 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 third monitoring inspection on 6 to 7 December 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the principal, the vice principal, senior and middle leaders, staff, representatives from the task group, the chief executive officer and the school improvement partner from the trust, and pupils. Learning was observed alongside the principal and vice-principal. The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work in English and mathematics and talked to pupils about their learning. Inspectors focused their work on the areas for improvement identified in the July 2016 inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, two new teachers started at the school. One left almost immediately and school leaders are teaching this class. A new teacher has been appointed from within the trust and is due to start in January 2018. Another teacher has resigned and is due to leave her post at the end of December 2017. A teacher is returning from maternity leave for four days a week. The school has changed its admission policy for Nursery children and children can now start as soon as they are three years old.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last visit, leaders have taken effective action to improve aspects of teaching and learning highlighted for further development during the previous monitoring visit. For example, they have re-evaluated strategies used to teach phonics and started work to implement improved routines in phonics teaching. They have developed more opportunities for children in the early years to test out their learning in basic skills in the outdoor area, particularly in mathematics. Outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 1 have improved, although they are not in line with the national averages. Leaders have continued to frequently check on the quality of teaching. However, these checks and leaders' subsequent feedback to teachers are not resulting in rapid enough improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. Some variation in the quality of teaching remains, and, as a result, not all pupils are making strong progress.

Senior and middle leaders continue to lead by example. They regularly work alongside teachers, leading teaching and giving direction for improvement. This has been particularly focused for new teachers and those who have needed support to improve their teaching and their management of pupils' behaviour. However, this direction does not always result in better teaching and better outcomes for pupils. Leaders, including the trust's school improvement partner, agree that conversations and direction for improvement need to be more strongly focused on the progress that pupils and groups of pupils are making within lessons and over time.

Leaders have created a positive culture where staff want to share ideas and

celebrate things that are working well. Staff are successfully sharing some best practice within the school. For example, there is clear improvement and consistency in how well teachers and teaching assistants use the learning environment to support pupils' learning. Pupils access the information and ideas that have already been shared, discussed and displayed in the classroom to help them when they are working independently.

During the last monitoring visit, the achievement and progress of pupils were discussed in detail, along with systems that leaders use to check the progress that pupils are making. This information is still not precise or clear enough for leaders to confidently check that all pupils are making strong progress. Teachers and leaders look at pupils' work and carry out tests to check how well pupils are doing. However, this information is not drawn together well enough to present a clear view of where strengths and weaknesses in pupils' progress lie. Leaders in school and the trust agree that refining this information will help them to more accurately identify where they need to give most support and direction. It will also support the task group in being able to be more probing in their challenge to leaders about the progress pupils are making.

When the school was first judged to require special measures, leaders rightly rallied to take control of directing improvement in the school as a whole and in classrooms. They have now started to give more responsibility to class teachers, for example in identifying any gaps in pupils' learning and putting strategies in place to address these. Targets for improvement in pupils' progress feed directly into the targets for the management of teachers' performance. Teachers prepare information for leaders about which pupils are doing well and any that are not, with clear reasons for these differences. Additional catch-up teaching sessions are used effectively to support pupils who are behind in their learning, but leaders agree that there needs to be a higher expectation that the majority of pupils will not fall behind if they are taught well. Leaders know that the time is right to raise the bar again in terms of teaching. They know that teachers are receptive to the challenge of finding ways to improve outcomes for pupils.

Leaders' work to improve pupils' progress in mathematics has been focused on developing pupils' reasoning skills and their application of number skills. Pupils have opportunities to carry out real-life, purposeful tasks that engage them and motivate them to do well. For example, during our visit, pupils were developing their learning about area and perimeter in the classroom and then applying these skills successfully to practical tasks outside. This, combined with a focus on pupils using practical resources to help their learning in mathematics, is supporting many pupils in making better progress. However, some year groups still have a substantial proportion of pupils who are working below age-related expectations. In addition, in some classes, teaching is not matched well enough to pupils' needs to make sure that the lower- and higher-ability pupils are making strong progress.

To improve pupils' outcomes in phonics, leaders have formed a partnership with another school in the trust to learn from their success. Inspired by the strategies

they have seen being used and the stronger pupils' outcomes, leaders have re-evaluated the teaching of phonics and put new systems in place at Fieldhead. There has been an improvement in how adults successfully and consistently model sounds and the corresponding names for letters. Pupils are becoming more confident in applying phonics to their reading and writing. Leaders agree that further training for all staff who deliver phonics teaching will improve how well adults support pupils, particularly those of lower ability, in transferring their knowledge of sounds to their written work.

The task group continue to be focused on the important aspects of the school's performance, including pupils' attendance, school finances and the quality of teaching. They challenge school leaders about any performance that is not strong enough. Leaders provide the task group with honest information, but although the school assessment system provides attainment information, it does not highlight pupils' progress and, consequently, some slower progress being made by pupils is not always picked up. The task group balance the challenge they give to school leaders with their pride and support for the positive changes that have taken place. For example, they rightly celebrate the changes for the better in pupils' behaviour, their attitudes to learning, the school environment, the improved partnerships with parents and the quality of teaching and learning in early years.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Although there are still some ongoing changes within teaching staff, all staff are very clear about the school priorities and they are committed to developing their own practice to improve outcomes for pupils. Some teachers have relied heavily on leaders' support and interventions that have been put in place. They have not all consistently checked carefully on the progress that pupils of different abilities are making in lessons.

Teachers and support staff have put leaders' plans for improvement in mathematics into action in the classroom. Pupils' work across school shows evidence of leaders' direction in providing pupils with opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to reasoning and problem-solving tasks. There is consistency in how pupils use practical resources, including information and direction in the classroom, to support their learning. Pupils' confidence in mathematics, their understanding and their ability to talk about their learning all show signs of improvement. Teachers know that they need to make sure that the tasks they set meet the needs of all pupils, and in particular those who are behind and those who are the most able.

In English, teachers are effectively supporting pupils in building their skills and ideas through a particular style of writing. Pupils' work in many classes shows how they are supported in developing their ideas and improving their vocabulary choices. However, teachers do not consistently identify mistakes pupils make in spelling and grammar, and often opportunities to address misconceptions are missed. Leaders and teachers agree that having clear non-negotiable elements of spelling and grammar will raise expectations in how well pupils make improvements to their

work.

A focus on understanding that pupils of higher ability have the potential to work at greater depth is resulting in some small gains being made in the proportion of pupils working at higher standards. However, the success of this is varied throughout school.

Adults in early years work as a team to make sure that the areas of learning in the classroom and the outdoor area provide opportunities for children to explore and develop their ideas. A strong focus on extending opportunities for children to apply their learning in basic skills to tasks in the outdoor area is leading to children making stronger progress, particularly in mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

High expectations for good behaviour have continued and are well understood by the school community. The priority school leaders have given to supporting pupils in managing their behaviour and expecting the best from them has resulted in the majority of pupils being settled and ready to learn. A range of strategies to instil strong moral values in pupils, build pupils' self-esteem and address their emotional needs are used effectively to improve pupils' personal development and well-being.

The vast majority of pupils are proud of their school. They are now keen to talk about their lessons and what they are getting better at. Some can explain how teachers help them to improve their work. In most lessons, pupils display positive attitudes to learning. Where the behaviour of some pupils is challenging, other pupils know how to keep focused on their own work and maintain their good behaviour.

Pupils feel safe in school and demonstrate an understanding of why everyone should be treated equally. They say that they are given strong guidance and support in how to tackle bullying or racism in society. One pupil said, 'We are different on the outside, but inside we are all the same.'

Links with other agencies are positive. Leaders seek additional support and expertise to make sure that those pupils who have specific significant needs, and their families, are well supported.

A wide range of strategies are in place to promote pupils' good attendance. Pupils speak of rewards, such as the money for class resources, that they are eager to earn. More importantly, they know that good attendance will help them, as one girl said, to 'learn more, get better jobs and live good lives'. Leaders know that they have more to do to work with families to improve attendance: school attendance figures have improved steadily, but are still not in line with national averages.

Positive attitudes to learning are promoted well as soon as children enter school in Nursery. Strong relationships between children and adults are formed and children

show confidence, resilience and interest in their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Despite leaders' efforts to provide focused, targeted support for them, the oldest pupils still have significant gaps in their learning. As well as focused academic support, leaders and teachers are making sure that the social and emotional needs of these pupils are well met to ensure that they are as well prepared for secondary school as possible.

For many other pupils, the progress they are making is improving, although leaders agree that this needs to be even more rapid and consistent across school if pupils are to catch up with other pupils nationally. The progress and attainment of pupils in mathematics show the most significant improvements this term. The proportion of pupils who are now working within the national age-related expectations in mathematics has increased, and is becoming more in line with the national average in most year groups. This adds to the better progress made by pupils in reading last year, where the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was close to the proportion of pupils reaching these standards nationally.

Although some variation remains across key stage 1, by the time pupils reach the end of Year 2, their outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are improving.

The improved understanding of the progress pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are making is helping leaders to accurately identify the support they need. Leaders have a better understanding of which programmes of work and support are having the best impact for pupils. As a result, these pupils are starting to make better progress.

External support

The trust and school leaders show ambition for school improvement and the removal of special measures. The trust continues to provide regular school improvement visits to support school leaders in their work. It instigates and directs work with other schools within the trust to share best practice, which school leaders embrace. The trust has taken effective action to address the challenges that school leaders have faced with recruitment and teaching appointments.

Trust leaders agree that now the good foundations for improvement are in place, they need to step up their challenge to school leaders in making sure that improvements in teaching and learning are more rapid, with a shared focus on the progress that pupils and groups of pupils are making. The trust agrees that it needs to work with school leaders to devise more effective ways of checking the progress that is being made by groups and cohorts of pupils across school.