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Mr Naresh Chandla
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Dear Mr Chandla

Special measures monitoring inspection of Seva School

Following my visit with Nigel Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 27–28 February 2018, 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in September 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

I strongly recommend that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - resolving the misunderstanding, misplaced priorities and lack of trust that exist between leaders, governors and staff
 - improving communication and cooperation across the school community
 - agreeing on a permanent leadership structure
 - ensuring that roles and responsibilities of governors, leaders and staff are clearly understood and that no one exceeds their authority or neglects their duties
 - making sure that systems for managing staff performance are sufficiently rigorous and applied with fairness and consistency
 - ensuring that the requirement to publish information about how the school meets its public sector equality duty is published on the school's website.
- Make sure that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met in order to ensure pupils' safety and welfare across the whole school by:
 - urgently carrying out all the required checks on staff
 - making sure that pupils' school records, including admissions, medical information, academic performance and home contact details, are kept up to date and accessible to the right people at the right time
 - making sure that all staff understand their duty of care to safeguard pupils and do not obstruct this vital aspect of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum so that all groups of pupils, especially the most able and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make the best possible progress, by:
 - implementing consistent, reliable and effective assessment procedures in all year groups, including the early years
 - making sure that staff have access to regular training and feedback about the quality of their work.

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

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 27 February 2018 to 28 February 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. We met with you; the deputy headteacher (secondary); other leaders; members of staff and three members of the board of trustees, including the newly elected chair. Inspectors also met two groups of pupils. Inspectors met with an external partner who is a national lead of education and an executive headteacher of a local multi-academy trust, and leaders from Khalsa Primary School who are providing external support to the school. Inspectors took account of 10 responses to Parent View. Inspectors conducted joint lesson observations with either members of the senior leadership team or leaders from Khalsa Primary School and scrutinised pupils' books. They checked the school's arrangements for safeguarding and policy documents from the website.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the acting headteacher has been permanently appointed from January 2018. The deputy headteacher (primary), who had joined in September 2017, left in December 2017; she has not yet been replaced. Her post and that of literacy coordinator are both being unofficially covered by the key stage 2 coordinator, who was also appointed in September 2017. The newly appointed head of science, who was also head of teaching and learning in secondary, left in February 2018. There have been four changes to teaching staff since Christmas 2017 (three in secondary and one in primary). There is currently supply cover in English and science in secondary. All teaching posts in primary are now permanent. This term, the school has engaged very recently the external support of three senior leaders from Khalsa Primary School in Slough for two days a week each. Starting from the week of this monitoring visit, the headteacher of Khalsa (who is also a trustee of the school) will be executive principal of Seva, again for two days a week. The chair of trustees stepped down in December 2017, and a new chair has been appointed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Despite the recent appointment of a permanent headteacher, the school lacks the capacity to improve further without extensive reliance on external support. There is still not a full senior leadership team in place. There is a lack of trust and confidence between leaders and governors. Leaders have been too slow to address a number of the key issues identified from the inspection in 2016. They are very busy in planning, doing and monitoring but neither they nor the governors have acted strategically enough nor evaluated the impact of their actions.

The lack of communication between leaders and governors means that there are widespread gaps in governors' knowledge and understanding of the school.

Governors were unaware of the contradictory or missing information on the website. They did not know that the school had obtained and spent literacy and numeracy catch-up funding for Year 7 pupils this year. They were unable to explain the absence of any evaluation or proposals for the pupil premium and physical education (PE) and sport premium funding. They did not know about the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, as they did not know how these pupil groups are doing. Governors were unaware that a recent pupil premium external review had taken place. Leaders and governors have an overgenerous view of the school; they were not familiar with the Ofsted criteria for 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate'.

Roles and responsibilities of leaders are not clear; for example, in primary there are coordinators for subjects (literacy, numeracy and phonics), phases and assessment, with a potential overlap in duties. In secondary, there are now subject leaders in English, mathematics and humanities. However, there is again a vacancy in science and no leaders identified for other GCSE subjects taught, such as business studies. Some leaders were unaware that the external leaders working with the school were going to continue their role after half term.

Only now, after four visits, is there an assessment system in place in secondary, which is understood by inspectors, teachers and pupils. However, it has been in place for a very short space of time. In early years and primary, inspectors had little confidence in the assessment information provided by leaders; it highlighted wide differences in outcomes between teachers' assessments and the assessments conducted by external leaders.

In early years, leaders submitted assessment information on Reception children in 2017, which has been published and validated nationally as 29% achieving a good level of development. This is well below the national average and well below the 88% achieved by the school in 2015. However, leaders told inspectors that the figure should have been 70% but were unable to explain how the error occurred. Governors were unaware of this anomaly or leaders' attempts to rectify the issue until inspectors brought it to their attention.

The website still does not meet requirements for information that academies and free schools must publish on the curriculum, SEN, the pupil premium, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, PE and sport premium for primary schools, governance and financial information about the school. Conflicting information is still on the website despite repeated assurances by leaders during the inspection that this had been addressed. For example, the published special education report 2016/17, still on the website the day after the inspection, continues to name four different members of staff on different pages as the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). The name of the link governor is incorrect.

The curriculum for key stage 4 is underdeveloped. Information on subjects on the website is scant and contains grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors. There is a narrow range of GCSE subjects on offer to Year 9 pupils who began their GCSE

courses from September 2017. There are no alternative routes to GCSE in place, despite the growing diversity in the ability and needs of the pupil intake. For some pupils, GCSE is an inappropriate route. There is little sign yet of an expansion of the key stage 4 curriculum offer for current Year 8 pupils who will start key stage 4 courses in Year 9 next year.

There is a full enrichment curriculum for pupils after school, which includes drama, media studies and personal, social and health education. However, pupils, who enjoy the activities, complained that it means a long school day. The impact of this enrichment programme is not evaluated by leaders.

There is insufficient evaluation of additional funding for pupil premium, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding and PE and sport funding. Leaders are too focused on provision and operational matters rather than strategy and evaluation. They are too dependent on external evaluation.

There is not enough evaluation of whether monitoring of teaching and learning in secondary is sufficiently challenging or having an impact. Senior leaders are able to identify strengths in lessons but are not as consistent in identifying points for improvement.

Despite ongoing weaknesses in leadership and governance, these have not had an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning, which is improving, or on pupils' personal development, well-being and behaviour, which are a strength of the school. The newly appointed headteacher has focused his energies on recruiting suitable staff, which has led to successful appointments in secondary where teaching has improved. There have also been improvements to teaching in primary. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and developing their roles, although some are new to their posts.

Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and robust. Governors carry out appropriate checks to ensure that leaders have met all their statutory responsibilities. Pupils, however, expressed concerns that the school was overcrowded and that the temporary classrooms restricted their space in the playground at breaktimes.

Leaders acknowledge the limited space and capacity of the building. They offered this as a reason for the restricted curriculum at secondary (lack of facilities to offer design and technology, music and drama). Yet they are planning for an additional 85 pupils in September 2018 (50 more in Reception, as Year 10 opens up for the first time, and 35 additional places in Year 7). The school has proposals to take on the lease of a nearby building by the summer but has no clear contingency plan if this fails or is delayed. For example, the one science laboratory the school currently has will not cope with an additional year group in secondary. More temporary classrooms will be required on the playground, limiting pupils' space even further.

The very small number of parents and carers who responded to Parent View were

overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school; they all said that their children are safe and happy in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Despite the turbulence in leadership and management, teaching and learning have improved, especially in secondary where there are many strengths. There is a purposeful learning environment in many secondary classes. Teachers are highly committed to professional development, and their morale remains high. They are very receptive to feedback. In many lessons, work is pitched appropriately, taking account of pupils' different starting points. In Spanish, for example, pupils have made rapid gains in their learning. They were highly engaged and enthusiastic in their learning.

In primary, there are still times when the level of challenge is pitched to the middle. This leaves some pupils, in mathematics for example, to arrive at all the correct answers to questions, with no additional challenge. Meanwhile, others consistently get all the answers wrong with no modification of work or opportunities for further practice and reinforcement.

The impact of additional adults is variable. In some instances, they spend too much of their time with low-attaining pupils or those who have SEN and/or disabilities. This limits the opportunities for those pupils to work with their peers or have access to their teachers. Written feedback in exercise books indicates variable subject knowledge in English and mathematics of the additional adults. There are grammatical errors in some adults' written feedback. In pupils' mathematics work on fractions, and in English there were instances of correct answers marked as wrong and wrong answers marked as correct. Some additional adults are in the classroom mainly to help pupils complete tasks rather than to support them in their learning.

Work is not consistently progressive. In key stage 2, there were examples of pupils previously having achieved successfully more challenging work, who are now working on less demanding work.

Pupils in secondary and primary have had limited opportunities to develop their reasoning in mathematics. As a result of the intervention of external support, teachers in primary have started to introduce reasoning into their lessons very recently, but it is too early to see the impact of this.

Pupils have opportunities to work on inference in reading in key stage 2, as well as in secondary. Where they are given opportunities to express their opinions, other pupils evaluate thoughtfully what they have said. In the best instances, pupils at all different starting points know the key terms they are learning about, for example 'fronted adverbials', and are able to give examples, applying them in their written work. In these classes, teachers set appropriately challenging work for most-able pupils. Elsewhere, there is a lack of pace, deeper questioning and challenge for

most-able pupils.

In secondary, books were well laid out and showed progress and appropriately sequenced work with extension tasks. Questioning in lessons was developing pupils' understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are highly committed to their work and apply themselves with eagerness and enthusiasm in lessons. They are compliant and remain resilient even if the pace of learning dips or they find the work too hard or too easy. Incidents of low-level disruption are very rare. Pupils have a good understanding of the locality and wider world, including faiths other than their own. Relationships are strong, and the small minority of pupils from a non-Sikh background are fully included and integrated and not made to feel different by pupils or staff.

Pupils are on task in lessons. There are good relationships between pupils and teaching staff and between pupils. There are clearly established routines from early years onwards. Pupils listen well to each other's answers and respect those with views different from their own. Pupils enjoy the wide range of enrichment activities, including fencing, debating and learning musical instruments. Students have the opportunity to take responsibilities as elected leaders.

There has been a decline in pupil attendance from previous above-average levels. The current rate for this academic year is below the national average for the previous year. Similarly, there has been an increase in persistent absence over time. It is currently at a rate higher than the national average last year. Leaders do not routinely track the attendance by different groups of pupils. Systems are not sufficiently robust.

Outcomes for pupils

Even allowing for the more generous teacher assessments rather than the rigorous external assessments recently carried out, pupils currently in school have not made enough progress from their well-above-average starting points in key stage 1 and above-average starting points in key stage 2. At best, pupils are on track to achieve slightly below to broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the external assessments indicate that standards in Year 6 are currently well below average. Work seen in pupils' books indicates that too many pupils do not have the basic literacy and numeracy skills required for when they move to the next stage in their education in secondary. Basic calculation errors in mathematics and literacy errors in English impede their progression in both primary and secondary.

Leaders have tracked pupil progress closely in year groups 1 to 6 from September 2017 to February 2018. This shows that most pupils, in most year groups, have made at least what the school considers to be expected progress in reading, writing

and mathematics. Where progress is less strong, it is in line with where the school has identified current or previous teaching to be less secure.

The numbers of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are very small in each year group. When their outcomes are collated, the school's assessment information shows that in Years 1 to 6, overall, they have not made as much progress as other pupils nationally with similar starting points.

In early years, the official published figure for children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception in 2017 indicates that outcomes were exceptionally low at 29%. However, leaders stated that the correct figure should have been 70%, close to the national average. Leaders' assessment for this year's Reception children shows a similar picture; they indicate that a broadly average proportion of children have achieved a good level of development already, from their below-average starting points in September 2017. However, a recent assessment carried out by external leaders indicates that just 28% of pupils are working at a good level of development, similar to last year's published figure. In secondary, leaders have carried out baseline assessments, which show that pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 started secondary at below-average starting points. The new assessment system has not been in place long enough for leaders to evaluate the progress that secondary pupils have made over time.

External support

Leaders and governors now recognise that, without the considerable additional external support that has been secured, it would be difficult for the current leadership to demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve. They acknowledged that previous external support had been ineffective.

Much of the support has been too recent to evaluate its impact. In primary, it has been in place a matter of weeks and has been largely taken up with assessing pupils and supporting teachers. Even in the first few weeks, there are signs that teachers are taking on board the feedback they have been receiving, for example, on introducing reasoning into mathematics lessons.

In secondary, an initial review of teaching and learning had been scheduled for the same date as the inspection visit so, again, it is too early to evaluate its impact. Senior leaders have started to engage positively with local partnerships in Coventry.