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23 March 2018

Mrs J Leishman  
Principal  
The Hill Primary Academy  
Tudor Street  
Thurnscoe  
Rotherham  
South Yorkshire  
S63 0DS

Dear Mrs Leishman

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Hill Primary Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 13 March 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 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 may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the transition monitoring board, the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2016**

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - timelines in action plans are met and improvements are then monitored rigorously to ensure they are effective
  - governors hold leaders to account for timelines and the effectiveness of improvements
  - middle leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and early years leader, have the skills and knowledge so that they are more effective in carrying out their roles
  - accurate information is gathered on pupils' attainment so that it can be used to follow pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning
  - safeguarding is more effective, including improved monitoring and successful implementation of procedures
  - a new marking policy is implemented effectively so that teachers give pupils feedback that will help them improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' achievements by ensuring that teachers:
  - use accurate information on pupils' attainment to plan their lessons so that they can identify and meet pupils' different abilities and learning needs
  - deploy extra adults more effectively to promote pupils' learning.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
  - a greater proportion of pupils attend school more regularly
  - teachers and more pupils follow the guidance and procedures as noted in the behaviour policy.
- Improve outcomes and ensure the welfare of pupils in the early years by ensuring that:
  - all welfare requirements are consistently met and any risks are quickly identified and addressed
  - leaders and managers in the early years are effective in identifying and prioritising actions to improve provision
  - an accurate assessment system is fully and effectively implemented and it is used to inform teaching and promote improved outcomes.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 13 March 2018**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the principal, the head of school, the consultant coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo) and the inclusion and safeguarding manager. In addition, the principal and the inspector visited lessons to observe teaching and learning. The vice-principals and subject leaders for English and mathematics were observed checking the progress made by pupils in their English and mathematics workbooks. The inspector also observed pupils' behaviour during breaktimes. Discussions were held with the chief executive officer (CEO) and members of the transition monitoring board (TMB). A telephone conversation took place with the vice-chair of trustees from the Astrea Academy Trust (the trust). The inspector scrutinised a wide range of information including information about pupils' attainment, punctuality, attendance and behaviour.

### **Context**

At the beginning of the spring term 2017, the executive principal was appointed as principal. At the same time, the principal was appointed as head of school. The substantive SENCo and early years leader, with responsibility for phonics, have resigned since the last monitoring inspection.

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

The principal's evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and uncompromising. Leaders' strategic impact plan, the school's improvement planning, outlines the actions needed to secure rapid progress towards the removal of special measures. However, the plans do not contain sufficient targets by which improvement can be measured incisively. Despite this, members of the TMB and the trust, including the vice-chair of trustees, have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As the vice-chair of trustees said, 'There's a way to go yet.'

Pupils' assessment information has been checked by the trust, representatives from the Dearne hub of schools and by an independent external moderator. As a result, senior leaders know that the information in the school's assessment tracking system is accurate. Consequently, the leaders for English and mathematics have a much better understanding of the progress pupils are making from their starting points in the subjects that they lead. These leaders are becoming adept at identifying why pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable. While checking pupils' workbooks, the subject leaders told the inspector that pupils' progress is not as rapid as it could be because teachers do not use assessment information incisively enough when planning for pupils' learning. The vice-principals are working on this aspect of school improvement during their coaching and mentoring sessions with class teachers.

The consultant SENCo continues to lead the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities well. Systems and procedures are now embedded in the school's work. The strengths and weaknesses of additional intervention activities have been identified. For example, the additional mathematics activities have not proven to be successful. These are under review.

Leaders have undertaken a root and branch review of registration procedures. Support staff have been trained and are completing attendance registers accurately. Pupils, absolutely correctly, are now marked as late if they arrive after registration closes at 9.30am.

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

During this inspection, the principal and inspector carried out joint lesson observations. The principal evaluated the teaching and learning in Years 4 and 6 precisely and was very disappointed with the provision for phonics in the early years and key stage 1. The principal, quite rightly, identified that teachers, teaching assistants and pupils do not use subject-specific vocabulary, such as phoneme and digraph, as a matter of course. It was also noted that the structure and the pace of the phonics sessions were not in accordance with the requirements of the phonics scheme of work that the school has adopted. Crucially, the principal identified that adults do not model the formation of letters well. As a result, pupils' letter formation is very poor, many letters are incorrectly sized and some letters are reversed. Pupils in Year 1 are not well prepared for the forthcoming phonics screening check or for the demands of the curriculum in Year 2.

The vice-principals have supported the development of teaching and learning well. However, much of their work is lost to the school when short-term supply teachers move on to posts in other schools.

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

Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that safeguarding is effective. Pupils' attendance is improving. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing. More pupils are arriving on time for school every day. As a result, pupils are in lessons for longer and are beginning to make more rapid academic progress.

The principal led the review of the school's behaviour policy at the beginning of the spring term 2018. All staff, including the lunchtime supervisory staff, are now acting in accordance with the requirements of the new policy. The pupils appreciate this consistent practice. They understand fully the rewards and sanctions relating to behaviour. Their behaviour in and around school is much improved.

Pupils are eager to please and are anxious to take on more areas of responsibility around the school. They appreciate the changes that the principal is making in school. As the CEO said, the pupils have noticed the principal's 'love, care and

optimism'. That optimism is reflected in the visit that pupils in upper key stage 2 recently made to Oxford University. Leaders are raising the aspirations of pupils and their parents.

Members of the TMB appreciate the information about the number and types of behavioural incidents that the principal has started to supply on a monthly basis. As a result, they are fulfilling their support and challenge roles more effectively.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics remain low. However, the rate of improvement, especially in reading and writing, has begun to quicken recently.

Leaders have identified that children in the early years are not making as much progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they are in other areas of the curriculum. The senior leader who is leading the early years, until a substantive leader is appointed, has developed plans to address this weakness.

### **External support**

Following a request from leaders, the local authority has agreed to check and validate the school's early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 assessment information at the end of the current academic year.

Assertive action was taken by the trust to strengthen leadership further after the last monitoring inspection. The trust continues to challenge and support the school's work robustly; for example, by supporting the development of mathematics across the school, evaluating the teaching and learning in specific year groups and reviewing the effectiveness of additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils.

The trust has agreed to finance the purchase of reading books to support the urgently needed development of phonics skills in the early years and key stage 1.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Leaders must review and improve the provision for phonics and early reading in the early years and key stage 1 straightaway.