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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 Catherine Precious, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in November 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.

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 chief executive officer of the multi academy trust, 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
Ofsted 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 who they are accountable to
 - 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 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 second monitoring inspection on 6 March 2018 to 7 March 2018

Evidence

Inspectors considered the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents so that they could consider the areas for improvement that were identified at the inspection in November 2016. The inspectors met with at least seven members of teaching staff, as well as the principal, one of the vice-principals, the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). Meetings were held with the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), the Northern Education Trust (NET) director of governance, standards and safeguarding and a representative of the external support team. A telephone call was also held between the chief executive officer of the trust and the lead inspector. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and considered work in pupils' books. They did this alongside members of the leadership team. Inspectors held meetings with pupils to discuss their work in books and spoke to them in lessons, when appropriate. Many more pupils were spoken with informally during breaktimes.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, although the leadership and teaching teams have been relatively stable, there have been significant staff absences in both. An early years leader was new to post in January 2018, and the SENCo returned in December 2017 after a period of absence.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Historically, NET has offered little support to the school leadership team, something it intends to increase quickly. The trust has, however, brokered more intensive external support. This support has been in place since January 2018. It is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of leadership, teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes. The rate of improvement since the inspection in November 2016 indicates that it is unlikely that the school is on course to have the special measures judgements removed within the expected timescale of 18 to 24 months.

Leaders have a clear idea of their roles and responsibilities and the part they need to play in school improvement. Leaders demonstrate that they have the knowledge and expertise in their given area of responsibility. However, either through absence or being new to role, too many leaders have not been able to play an active and effective part in school improvement.

The principal has an action plan that identifies accurately the areas of weakness and how well the school has performed in reaching targets. There is now a more effective system to track pupils' progress, particularly that of pupils in upper key

stage 2. Weekly progress and assessment meetings track the progress of Year 6 pupils and effectively influence planned learning. For Year 2 pupils, this analysis takes place every three weeks. This thoroughness is not yet evident for other year groups. While half-termly assessments and progress meetings are held for all year groups, teacher absence has affected the accuracy and reliability of information supplied at these meetings. As a result, the school does not have an accurate view of pupils' progress throughout the school.

The principal is highly valued by her staff. They commented on how they feel valued and well supported. Staff commented on how support from the principal and vice principal is improving the quality of their teaching. Since January, teaching staff also receive external support, which is further improving the quality of teaching across the school.

Evaluations of teaching from senior staff and external coaches are now more realistic and focus well on specific action points. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching at a faster rate than identified at the last monitoring visit.

The inspection in November 2016 identified the need for a review of pupil premium funding. The initial review was judged by the interim executive board to be inaccurate. A subsequent review has not been completed in a timely fashion to be able to accurately consider the effective use of pupil premium funding.

Governors and representatives of the trust acknowledge that the support the school has received since November 2016 should have been more rapid, intense and demanding. This lack of support has significantly slowed the rate of improvement in teaching and learning. At the last monitoring visit, the roles and responsibilities of the IEB were unclear. There is now clarity in the role of each member of the IEB. Their ability to challenge and support the school is now clearly evident. The IEB has an accurate view of school improvement. The chair of the IEB quality assures the external support and draws accurate conclusions about its impact on school improvement.

All aspects of safeguarding remain thorough. Administrative staff ensure that all appropriate checks on staff and visitors are made and consistently recorded to ensure pupils' safety. School leaders deal well with issues or concerns that parents may raise. Leaders listen to parents and carers and ensure that they hold meetings with them as appropriate. Mediation between pupils takes place when necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Although the quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring visit, it is not improving consistently across the school. Too many teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the most able. For example, some teachers do not correct spelling mistakes at an age-appropriate level. Others are teaching concepts without checking pupils' understanding or

adapting learning to meet pupils' needs during the lesson.

As a result of the more recent, regular support, most teachers have a clearer idea of what they need to do to improve the quality of their teaching. Where teachers have received more consistent and intensive support, improvements are often significant, particularly in some of the upper key stage 2 classes.

Since January 2018, leaders have introduced some new learning schemes, for example in reading and in mathematics. The training teachers have received to deliver these new schemes and the consistency of approach and higher expectations are beginning to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The improved availability of information about pupil attainment and progress is helping teachers plan more accurately for pupils' needs. This is more comprehensively done in upper key stage 1 and upper key stage 2.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

At times, pupils demonstrate a lack of respect for others and the school environment when moving around the school and at breaktimes. Staff do not always challenge pupils' use of inappropriate language and it is therefore often repeated. Rates of pupil attendance remain below those of other pupils nationally. However, steps taken by the school have led to improvements of 0.8% in the past 12 months. For some individual pupils, improvement has been significant. A 'rapid response' team of staff takes action immediately to address non-attendance, particularly that of vulnerable pupils.

Adults are using a number of strategies to manage behaviour more consistently in the classroom. These strategies work well and pupils are generally well behaved in lessons. At times, pupils do not show that they are interested and want to learn. However, this is generally due to a lack of understanding about what is being taught and they therefore lose interest.

Pupils are beginning to take more responsibility for their own behaviour without the need for constant adult intervention. Pupils, as at the last monitoring visit, told inspectors that they feel safe and that they 'love' their school. A system is in place and is used well by pupils when they want to raise any concerns or speak to a member of the pastoral team.

Outcomes for pupils

The standards that pupils reach remains low. Pupils' progress is slow. Least-able pupils, in particular, often struggle to make progress, as they do not fully understand what they are being taught. When asked to explain what they have learned, too often pupils are unable to do so. In comparison, the most able pupils are not making enough progress as expectations are too low and they are not

moving on to more challenging work quickly enough. Basic literacy skills across other subjects are too weak. However, outcomes for pupils in Year 6 continue to improve so that they are more closely aligned to age-related expectations.

Early years

The new early years leader is experienced and knowledgeable about the developmental needs of young children but has had little time to bring about improvements. Since the inspection in November 2016, there has been a lack of skilled leadership of the early years. The outside environment does not promote learning as well as the inside environment. The quality and value of children's learning journeys vary considerably. Some improvements, however, are beginning to take place. The introduction of the deconstruction role-play area has led to improvements in language skills, particularly for boys. Adults' interactions with children are now more valuable as they are more effective at promoting learning. The provision is now better planned so that children spend more time at one activity, learning at greater depth, rather than moving rapidly between activities.

External support

At the last monitoring inspection, the trust acknowledged that it did not have the capacity from within to effectively support school improvement and that the support it initially brokered was ineffective. More recently, the trust has brokered more comprehensive support from another academy trust. Although this support has only been in place since January 2018, the positive effect of this support on school improvement is becoming evident.