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17 April 2018

Mrs Victoria Saville  
Principal  
Fieldhead Primary Academy  
Charlotte Close  
Birstall  
Batley  
West Yorkshire  
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Dear Mrs Saville

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Fieldhead Primary Academy**

Following my visit to your academy on 20–21 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the academy 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 am of the opinion that the academy may 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 20 March 2018 to 21 March 2018**

### **Evidence**

I 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, in classrooms and outdoors. I studied pupils' work with the lead teachers for English and mathematics. I spoke to parents and carers before school. My work was focused on the effectiveness of the actions taken to address the areas for improvement identified in the July 2016 inspection.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, one teacher has returned from maternity leave and is now sharing a key stage 1 class with the lead teacher for English. The vice principal is now teaching the Year 6 class full time. The early years leader has secured a post at another school and is due to leave at the end of the spring term. Leaders are still to secure a replacement for this position, but this process is underway. A teacher has been seconded from the trust and is currently supporting curriculum development.

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

School leaders are determined in their efforts to improve the school. They work hard, continually reviewing and improving their own practice, so that they can support staff, and ultimately the pupils, effectively. Their relentless work to improve relationships and create a sense of belonging is paying off. Staff are committed to improvement, just as leaders are. Pupils are proud of their school and eager to share its strengths with visitors. There has been a real shift in culture and expectations since the last inspection.

School leaders, the trust and the task group have put their foot on the pedal of improvement since the last monitoring visit. With pupils' attitudes to learning considerably improved, leaders have been well placed to rightly give their attention to the progress pupils are making across subjects.

All leaders have been united in unpicking and understanding assessment information so that they are crystal clear about where strengths and areas for improvement lie in the progress pupils are making. There is a much improved understanding of pupils', and groups of pupils', starting points, their context and potential barriers to learning, and the progress they are making from their starting points and since the last inspection. There is an honest and accurate view that the

oldest pupils still carry a legacy of underachievement. Close attention continues to be given to trying to improve the rate of progress for these pupils across subjects, as well as equipping them with the life skills that they will need to progress successfully to the next stage of their education. Leaders are aware that there are still some aspects of teaching, and consequently pupils' progress, that are not yet consistently good.

The task group is completely committed to its role in school improvement. The members agree that the refined and improved systems that leaders have put in place to check pupils' progress, and leaders' clear articulation of what this means, has enabled them to be more precise in their checks on leaders' work. The task group minutes show evidence of rigorous, professional challenge to leaders about any aspects of school that are not strong enough. As a result, they have an improved, comprehensive and accurate view of the school. They have a clear understanding of how additional funding is spent to support disadvantaged pupils. They know about the wide range of support and interventions that are in place to enable pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to access the curriculum. We agreed that the leaders for disadvantaged and SEN pupils now need to share an overview of the refined information they have for these pupils, so that the task group can check the progress that these pupils are making more accurately.

Equipped with a clear view of the attainment and progress that pupils and groups of pupils are making throughout school, leaders have worked successfully with staff to ensure that everyone has an improved system for, and understanding of, the progress that pupils are making, and have made since they started school. They have ensured that the training for and the delivery of phonics teaching has improved. In addition, they have given teachers and teaching assistants, pupils and parents a comprehensive guide to the expectations of the national curriculum, with set non-negotiables for each year group along the way.

Leaders constantly review the way that they are supporting and directing staff in bringing about improvements for the pupils at Fieldhead. They use the strong team of leaders to establish clear strategies for improvement, to support staff in putting these in place, and then check the effectiveness of this work. Lead teachers for English, mathematics, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils have a good understanding of the improvements being made in their areas of responsibility, and the work that is still needed. Other middle leaders and teachers also support improvement, such as delivering high-quality example lessons and sharing good practice in the effectiveness of a successful learning environment.

There is a very clear understanding, from leaders at all levels, of the journey that the school has taken since it was placed in special measures in July 2016. However, although leaders rightly celebrate the positive and essential transformation in aspects such as pupils' behaviour and the culture within the school, they are steadfast in their determination to continue to improve the quality of teaching and

learning so that it is consistently good or better.

Staff morale is high and the shared dedication to improvement is palpable. Staffing is more stable. Leaders know that they need to plan carefully to ensure a smooth handover when a new early years teacher starts in the summer term.

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

Teachers and learning support assistants have a recently improved understanding of the progress pupils of all abilities are making in their classes. Most are clear about what they need to plan next to move pupils' learning forward. Teachers speak confidently about how leaders' new systems for checking progress, particularly for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who may be working below national age-related expectations, have helped them to plan work that is better matched to pupils' needs.

Although there are some areas of teaching that leaders and teachers honestly and accurately evaluate as still needing further improvement, the shift in expectations of pupils is clear to see. Whole-school direction and support, for teachers and learning support staff, are successful in ensuring that everyone is clear about the strengths across the school and the areas needing focused development.

In writing, teachers now give pupils a clear set of non-negotiables for their year group. Many pupils talk confidently about the way this helps them to independently check their work and that of their peers. Teachers give pupils frequent opportunities to try out their writing skills. With improved systems for checking the progress that pupils are making, teachers are able to give them clear guidance about what they need to do next to improve. Teachers are identifying and addressing misconceptions more quickly and thoroughly. Pupils know that the highlighting in their books helps them spot where improvements can be made. They are responding positively to this process, showing pride in their work and an eagerness to improve. This focus is new, and leaders are working with teachers to ensure that these expectations, and the quality of support given to pupils to improve, are consistently strong.

Work to improve the teaching of phonics is having a positive impact on pupils' learning in reading and writing. Recent training and support for all the adults who deliver phonics sessions have resulted in routines and consistent strategies that are understood and enjoyed by all pupils. Adults model sounds accurately and pupils are more successful when copying them. Adults' lively demonstrations and frequent reminders about how to say and read sounds and words give pupils confidence to have a go themselves. In the sessions seen during my visit, all pupils, including those of lower ability, were joining in and engaged in their learning. Pupils are supported in applying the new sounds they have learned immediately to their spelling and writing. As a result, pupils are making more rapid progress in reading with fluency and more are developing more confidence in writing new words.

In mathematics, leaders and teachers have been focused on developing pupils' skills, confidence and understanding through using real-life, practical examples. The use of practical resources and an informative learning environment, where pupils can check back about their prior learning, are supporting pupils in making stronger progress in mathematics. There has been some recognition of the challenge needed for the higher-ability pupils. For example, during my visit, Year 2 most-able mathematicians were applying their skills and thinking to an outdoor task, working with the teacher responsible for outdoor learning to make beds for planting in the spring. Not only were they testing their mathematical reasoning, but they were also learning skills such as cutting safely with a saw.

In their ambition to give pupils strong foundations in learning for life, leaders and staff are giving close attention to developing pupils' skills across a broad curriculum. Pupils speak with animation about their topic work and the extra-curricular activities on offer. Teachers plan subject work carefully to ensure that it hooks pupils in, especially those who find concentrating, or managing their behaviour successfully, a challenge. It is having a positive effect. For example, Year 6 pupils' work shows the wide range of opportunities they have to discuss, debate, share and develop their learning across subjects. This often involves testing out their skills in English and mathematics, but also widening their experiences and skills through subject-specific learning. Many pupils say how they enjoy having shared books that are linked to their topic work.

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

Leaders have created a new culture at Fieldhead. Being part of Fieldhead has become something to be proud of. Pupils, parents, staff, the task group and the trust reinforce this view.

Dedication to promoting good attendance and punctuality, and raised expectations in pupils taking pride in their work and appearance are bringing changes that are having a positive effect on pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. The school environment is decorated with messages and direction, from leaders and the pupils themselves, about good conduct and being a good citizen. For example, leaders give reminders about good attendance and high expectations in having a smart uniform. Pupils promote kindness and ways to stop bullying and praise each other for their contributions. All contribute to a shared vision and a sense of belonging.

Pupils' attendance has continued to improve since my last visit and is now similar to the national picture. Persistent absence is reducing because of the successful work taking place with pupils and their families. Exclusions are reducing because behaviour is managed more successfully in a fully inclusive, nurturing environment where there are high expectations in how pupils should behave and treat each other. Bullying is not accepted. Any incidents are supported well and are now rare.

Pupils can talk about a range of ways that they are taught to keep safe in and out of school. However, interestingly, a recent school questionnaire found that 10% of pupils say that they do not feel safe. We discussed leaders doing further work around this to find out what makes pupils feel unsafe and how these concerns can be addressed.

Leaders know that they have many families who are vulnerable and pupils who have high needs. Staff work hard in class, in the nurture provision and in the outdoor learning areas to address these needs. They know that they have some pupils who find it very hard to manage their behaviour. Leaders continue to be committed to supporting these pupils so that they too can be successful learners.

Tellingly, all of the pupils I spoke to during this monitoring inspection were unanimous in their view that behaviour in the school has improved. One child explained that this was because, whatever their worries, however cross they may be, 'adults are always calm, help to take the stress out of the situation and help us work it out'. Other pupils present at the time nodded assuredly in agreement.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Close attention to supporting the emotional and behavioural needs of the oldest pupils, and ensuring that they have opportunities to apply their new skills straight into practical, real-life situations, is helping them to become better prepared for the challenges of secondary school and beyond. Gaps in learning are narrowing, but about half of these pupils are currently working below the national age-related expectations.

The whole-school work around understanding pupils' progress over time and in lessons has improved the way teachers and learning support assistants match work to the needs of individual pupils and groups of pupils. As a result, the pace of pupils' progress across subjects has generally increased. Leaders are aware of where outcomes in attainment need to be better, such as at the end of key stages 1 and 2, and have comprehensive plans and support in place to improve these.

Improved systems to check the progress of SEN pupils, and work and provision that is better matched to their needs are starting to have a positive impact on these pupils making stronger progress from their starting points.

The funding for disadvantaged pupils is directed carefully to address the barriers pupils have to their learning. Leaders can articulate significant improvements in the emotional, social and welfare needs of these pupils. We agreed that providing clearer information about the progress of this group of pupils, using the same process that has been used for pupils overall, will deepen everyone's understanding of where gaps in learning remain.

## **External support**

The trust has worked effectively with school leaders, the task group and staff to assiduously address the areas identified for further improvement at the previous monitoring visit. As a result, the improvements made in teaching and learning have been more rapid this term. The school community is positive about the strengths and opportunities the trust brings. The school improvement partner continues to visit regularly. Most notably this term, this work has included working with leaders and staff in developing skills to accurately identify the progress pupils are making. This system has been applied consistently by all staff, who, consequently, have a much clearer view of how to carefully plan the next steps pupils need to take. Other trust leaders support the ongoing improvements in areas such as writing and mathematics.

Leaders continue to take part in the assessment meetings held by the local authority. They say that these are helpful in moderating their judgements, as well as providing further information about assessment.

The school is part of a local community hub, BBEST (Batley and Birstall Excellence in Schools Together), which provides further opportunities for sharing ideas and best practice.