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Dear Mrs Gedney

Special measures monitoring inspection of Parklands Primary School

Following my visit with Elizabeth Moore and Gayle Bacon, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 22 to 23 May 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 2017.

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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2017.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - setting out plans to improve the quality of teaching and leadership which precisely enable leaders and governors to effectively check that actions taken have been successful
 - providing good-quality training for all staff to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in the early years and in writing
 - developing the role of middle and subject leaders so that they can support colleagues to improve the quality of teaching and learning
 - improving the appraisal process for teachers so that it is more rigorous
 - fully evaluating the impact of the use of the funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and acting on the findings
 - evaluating the impact of how the pupil premium funding is used to accelerate progress of disadvantaged pupils and acting on the findings
 - carrying out frequent and detailed analysis of pupils' outcomes and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and using findings to raise standards.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early years by:
 - improving the knowledge and skills of leaders and staff and ensuring that they work together more closely to plan effective learning for children
 - ensuring that assessments in the early years are based on thorough evidence of children's achievement and skills
 - training adults to support children in their learning successfully, through effective questioning and good modelling of language
 - ensuring that the teaching of phonics is well structured, of high quality and sharply evaluated for its impact on children's learning
 - setting out plans to improve the quality of teaching and leadership which precisely enable leaders and governors to check that actions taken have been successful.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach English grammar, spelling and punctuation effectively across the curriculum
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations for the standard of pupils' written work across the curriculum

- reviewing the effectiveness of the quality of teaching and learning of phonics to ensure that attainment continues to improve and more pupils attain the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check
- ensuring that the work teachers set provides sufficient and appropriate challenge for all groups of pupils, particularly the most able.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 22 May 2018 to 23 May 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the partnership headteacher, six governors, the early years lead, reading and mathematics leaders, the inclusion leader, the specialist leader of education for writing, the local authority early years adviser, the senior school improvement manager and the school bursar. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers and pupils. Inspectors visited all classes and evaluated pupils' work. A range of documents were scrutinised, including the school's post-Ofsted action plans, the school's self-evaluation, behaviour logs, governors' monitoring visits and minutes of governing body meetings, and the school's current assessment information.

Context

Since the last inspection, the school has continued to have trouble recruiting staff, and leaders have been required to use temporary teachers to cover classes. Several leadership posts have remained unfilled, including key roles, such as the lead teacher for writing. Several classes are taught by part-time teachers sharing a class responsibility.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders have not ensured that plans for improvement are rigorous enough to bring about rapid change. The local authority has provided support and guidance. However, leaders have not acted effectively on the advice received. Leaders have not implemented a thorough programme of checks and review to ensure that changes are sustained. Leaders have not effectively held staff to account or ensured that the teaching 'non-negotiables' are firmly in place in all classes. As a result, leaders have an unrealistic view of the pace of change or of what they believe is happening in classrooms.

The school's plans for improvement are not strategic or rigorous enough to make sure that the momentum of change is maintained. Leaders' evaluations of school improvement focus too much on what has been done, and do not consider the impact of actions on the progress pupils are making. Leaders are too over-reliant on external advisers to set the pace of change. They are not maintaining the drive for change in between visits from advisers.

Leaders have not ensured that staff have a clear understanding of the revised expectations of teaching and learning. Leaders' messages to staff are confused and overly complicated. The school's list of 'non-negotiables' for teaching are not concise, contributing to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning being less strong than leaders planned. Leaders' checks on the implementation of the 'non-negotiables' are not rigorous enough. Teachers are not consistently adhering to them. Teachers'

expectations of what pupils should achieve are too low. Leaders have not set high enough expectations for staff.

Leaders have not developed the role of middle and subject leaders. Leadership roles remain unfilled, and teachers who are at the upper pay scale are not being utilised to take on whole-school responsibilities. Subject leaders for mathematics and reading do not have a strategic role in developing their subject across the school. They do not have a secure overview of the improvements made in their subjects and insufficiently hold teachers to account.

Leaders have adjusted the appraisal process. However, due to the cycle of performance management, leaders have not made significant changes. Since the last inspection, leaders have not challenged effectively the underperformance of some teachers. Leaders have not supported the development of teachers' skills effectively enough.

The quality of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has not been monitored carefully enough. Until recently, the systems for checking their progress and attainment have not been robust. Leaders do not have a secure understanding of the progress these pupils are making. Leaders have taken steps to track the spending of the funding for these pupils. However, as systems to check the impact of the use of this funding are still very new, leaders are insufficiently aware of how well these pupils are progressing.

Leaders have responded to the advice given in the review of the spending of the pupil premium funding. Actions put in place to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils have focused on setting short-term targets for pupils to achieve. Leaders did not ensure that teachers understood the new approach and, consequently, teaching did not match pupils' needs. The school's own assessment information shows that many disadvantaged pupils did not achieve their targets. Leaders have acknowledged this and have made changes to the process for the next round of target setting.

After taking advice from the partnership headteacher, leaders have made changes to the system used to check the attainment and progress of pupils. Leaders recognised that the previous system was giving an over-inflated view of pupils' attainment. The system is very new and leaders were unable to demonstrate the progress pupils are making.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to the teaching of writing across the school. Staff have taken part in training, and the approach is evident across the school. The school's own attainment information shows that the majority of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are achieving in line with the national average. However, in other year groups, pupils' attainment has not closed the gap with the national average sufficiently. Pupils' workbooks show that teachers are using the school's preferred approach. However, the quality of the work pupils produce is inconsistent.

Governors have responded well to the findings and recommendations contained in

the review of governance. They now have a secure understanding of the improvements required at the school. Governors have astutely identified areas of concern and have provided challenge regarding the pace of change and the actions of leaders. However, they have failed to hold leaders to account effectively. They have been too quick to accept that leaders' responses to challenge have had the desired effect.

In the early years, leaders have not implemented or acted effectively on advice received. Plans for improvement are not effective. The momentum of improvement has not been rapid enough since the last inspection. Staff have been over-reliant on external advisers and have not been determined enough to sustain change. Leaders' checks on the effectiveness of the early years provision have not established whether staff are developing the early years or not.

Leaders have not made sure that staff in the early years develop their knowledge of the early years curriculum. Planning for children's next steps is not consistent. The assessment of what children can do lacks rigour, and staff do not take equal responsibility for assessing the progress children make. Teachers do not choose activities and resources with care to target the areas of learning or children's next steps. Children are busy, but they do not make as much progress as they should.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The school has developed its approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers show pupils how to use a range of grammar and punctuation in their writing. Pupils' workbooks show that teachers identify spellings errors and pupils are encouraged to practise correct spelling. Teachers are not consistent in tackling pupils' grammar and punctuation mistakes. Sometimes, when teachers identify errors in pupils' work, these are not followed up, as is highlighted in the schools 'non negotiables' for staff. Pupils continue to repeat mistakes. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' presentation, and do not encourage pupils to produce work to a high standard.

Teachers do not routinely set tasks in lessons which match the needs of pupils. This applies particularly to the most and the less able pupils.

Leaders have timetabled daily phonics teaching. Teachers use information from their assessment of pupils' understanding of phonics to group pupils by ability. However, leaders have not ensured a consistent approach to developing pupils' phonic knowledge. Staff training to teach phonics has not been effective. Staff teaching phonics are not aware of the system they are using, or of how they should assess pupils' understanding in a lesson. The development of pupils' phonics skills is not rapid enough, and teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are too low.

Where teaching is stronger, teachers know what pupils should do next and challenge them to make the expected progress. Teachers use their secure subject knowledge to excite and interest pupils and they achieve the attainment targets set.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils are polite and kind to each other. They are courteous and are happy to talk with visitors about their learning. Pupils play well together on the playground, and there are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils are positive about the school.

In lessons, pupils are compliant and participate when required. However, sometimes pupils lack independence, and do not participate fully in the lesson. Where tasks do not challenge them sufficiently, pupils sometimes become distracted from their learning. They said that there are differences in teachers' expectations.

Pupils moving from one activity to another frequently waste time during the school day, for example, changing from physical education, coming in from playtime or moving to groups. Teachers do not show a sense of urgency and, as a result, pupils do not begin lessons on time, and learning time is lost.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' workbooks show that where teaching is stronger pupils make the progress expected of them, and they achieve their targets. However, the progress pupils make is inconsistent and, where teachers do not have high enough expectations for what pupils can achieve, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.

The school's own assessment information for pupils' attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 shows that the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard are likely to be in line with or above the 2018 national average. However, due to concerns over the reliability of the quality of assessment information, there is doubt over the accuracy of this prediction. Pupils' workbooks show that they have made progress in Year 6 towards the expectations for the end of key stage 2. However, inspectors found that there are still many gaps in pupils' knowledge.

The school's own assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils expected to achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is set to remain at the same level as in 2017. The proportion of children achieving the early learning goal for reading was low in 2017. This shows that some pupils have made more rapid progress in Year 1 in reading.

External support

The school has received support from the local authority through the appointment of a partnership headteacher to support the leadership team. The partnership headteacher and a local authority adviser have provided support for the early years. Staff from the early years have visited good local schools to observe their provision. The local authority has helped the school to develop the provision of writing, through links with local schools and the support of a specialist leader in education for writing. An experienced leader for SEN and/or disabilities from the local authority has

supported the school's leader for inclusion.