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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 Mike Tull, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 June 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 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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 academy executive council, and 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
Her Majesty's 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 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 is 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 third monitoring inspection on 12 to 13 June 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 conducted all inspection activity, except meetings, alongside the principal and the executive principal. They also met with several middle leaders and other senior leaders. Meetings were held with the chair of the academy executive council and directors from the Northern Education Trust (NET) and Delta Academies Trust. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and considered work in books. 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 inspection, there has been less staff absence and a new and substantially larger leadership team has been established. An executive principal from Delta Academies Trust is working with the principal. A new assistant principal has joined the senior leadership team alongside the principal and vice-principal. A new key stage 1 middle leader has joined the middle leadership alongside the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and early years lead. The early years leader is currently absent. All new leaders have previous leadership experience. An experienced teacher with leadership experience has been appointed for September 2018 to take on the lead role of English.

The governing body is no longer an interim executive board and has now become an academy executive council. However, its role remains the same, with the chair playing a major part in monitoring and challenging the impact and pace of support from both trusts. More recently, the number of pupils joining the school, in all year groups, has risen. This increased mobility of pupils, many of whom arrive with little or no English, is an additional issue to be addressed by senior leaders. The progress, attendance and additional needs of these pupils are being considered by senior leaders.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The two trusts have taken the collaborative and strategic decision to ensure that two dynamic leaders, the principal, from NET, and the executive principal, from Delta Academies Trust, are working in partnership to strengthen the leadership of this school. These two leaders have worked with directors from both trusts to complement and strengthen the current senior and middle leadership teams to improve the quality of teaching and learning, with appointments of new, experienced leaders. These new leaders know their roles and responsibilities and that they will be held accountable for implementing rapid improvement in teaching

and learning. They are already demonstrating skills in identifying strengths and weaknesses in current teaching and learning. Along with the vice-principal, they are also leading by example by modelling high-quality teaching in their own classrooms. Due to the newness of their appointments, there is no formal or organised plan for how they are going to monitor and implement improvements and no evidence of the effectiveness of their roles. This, leaders know, has to take place quickly to secure rapid improvement.

There have been some improvements made by the SENCo in the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or a disabilities, such as introducing an accurate register of pupils who have SEN. However, an effective system for tracking and evaluating the progress these pupils are making is not in place and, therefore, value for money or the success of interventions is difficult to ascertain. The SENCo is still receiving significant, and appropriate, support to establish more rapid improvement.

Senior leaders are regularly reviewing the school's improvement plan. A colour-coded risk rating clearly identifies that leaders have an accurate knowledge of the areas that still need significant improvement. Leaders also identify where actions are being addressed, but more careful monitoring to judge effectiveness is required. A pupil premium review has now been completed.

The system for tracking pupils' progress from their starting points, which was only available for some pupils at the last monitoring visit, is now in place for all pupils. This information is used at weekly meetings with class teachers to follow the progress pupils are making and quickly identify and support pupils who may be falling behind.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

More recently, and in part due to staff changes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher. Teachers are now more systematically identifying age-appropriate spellings and this can clearly be seen to be influencing pupils' improved spellings. The new reading strategy is having a demonstrable effect on pupils' improving literacy skills and knowledge and enhancing the curriculum. Pupils' pieces of extended writing are clearly evidencing their improving literacy skills. Some teachers, particularly in key stage 2, are good at modelling higher-order vocabulary. Teachers are becoming more proficient in following the school's marking and feedback procedures and this is becoming more influential in enabling pupils to improve their work. However, when work is not clearly marked some pupils cannot explain to adults whether the work they have completed is correct or how they arrived at the final answer.

The effectiveness of teaching assistants is variable. Some clearly work well in tandem with the teacher to support learning. Others are not addressing issues of poor behaviour or helping pupils understand their learning, despite them sitting with

a group of pupils or when moving around the classroom.

Teachers are beginning to use the new system for tracking pupils' progress to plan future learning for pupils. Some teachers are better at using this information to target learning appropriately. However, some less-able pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are still struggling to understand what they are learning in English and mathematics and cannot explain prior learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Staff are now more consistently challenging unwanted language or behaviours and doing so in an appropriate manner. Pupils are responding well to adult intervention and are more responsible for their own behaviours than since the first monitoring inspection. While speaking to pupils about their behaviour and the work in their books, pride in their work and realisation of what they can achieve is evident. In some lessons, however, too many pupils are passive and are not actively learning. This is generally attributable to the quality of teaching.

A new behaviour strategy was implemented two days prior to this inspection. Pupils, and adults, already understand the reward system and are eager to use it. At the moment, the strategy is still being established and leaders are already aware there is a need to make some refinements to make it more valuable and effective. Actions which improved safety and communication at breaktimes were identified at the last monitoring visit. These have been further developed with the introduction of 'play zones'. These were introduced only two days prior to this monitoring inspection and, therefore, whether this is enhancing pupils' experiences at breaktimes is not yet apparent.

Pupils' attendance remains below that of other pupils nationally. Leaders are aware of the need to be creative in addressing this issue and are working hard with the school's own 'rapid response team' to do so.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' achievements in English are beginning to improve and work in pupils' books demonstrates that this improvement is being sustained. The rising expectations of teachers are beginning to influence pupils' work as pupils rise to these expectations. Pupils' depth of knowledge and comprehension of reading material is improving and this, in turn, is influencing an improvement in the standards achieved in writing. Pupils, except the least able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are also showing a greater confidence and depth of knowledge in mathematical concepts.

Early Years

There has been an improvement in the early years provision for learning in the outdoor environment. Adults are ensuring that outdoor provision is better planned so that children's basic communication skills are enhanced through a range of interesting and varied activities. Outdoor equipment is now better used to promote learning and to interest children. Some adults are good at encouraging children to use a more varied and precise vocabulary through play and discussion. Activities are well planned to promote children's social and phonic skills. For example, children were seen to be working well together to identify the sounds they need to write words on their clip boards as they excitedly moved around the classroom while taking part in an 'animal safari'. The early years leader has set up good systems for planning activities so that they take into account children's interests and any gaps in their knowledge. In her absence, senior leaders are carefully monitoring the effectiveness of early years provision.

External support

Since the last monitoring inspection, the Delta Academies Trust and NET have worked extremely well together to support the school. Both trusts are identifying the most appropriate manner in which they can support the school. The Delta Academies Trust is now providing a comprehensive package of support for the school, including support from directors of learning and experienced teaching staff. Staff at the school are also working with five primary schools in a local Delta Academies Trust led cluster. NET also supports the school through the availability of mathematics and early years specialists. The principal has brokered intensive external support for the SENCo.