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Mrs Law and Mrs Ward  
Joint Acting Headteachers  
Alderman's Green Community Primary School  
Alderman's Green Road  
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Dear Mrs Law and Mrs Ward

### **Short inspection of Alderman's Green Community Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 27 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement, which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Alderman's Green Primary School has been through a period of considerable change over recent months. Many staff have left the school. There is currently no substantive headteacher. You are jointly acting headteachers. You are both long-standing, experienced members of staff. With support from a local headteacher as interim executive headteacher, you are providing much-needed stability. This arrangement has restored faith in the school's leadership from parents and staff and brought about some significant improvements in a short space of time.

Your assessment of the school's current performance is accurate. You have identified the correct priorities for improvement and have put in place appropriate actions to address them, which are already having an impact on pupils' progress. However, outcomes are not where they need to be because teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. You are working hard in collaboration with all staff and external advisers to improve this. Effective support has been provided by the local authority, which brokered the support of the interim executive headteacher. He has provided expert guidance, not only to you as acting headteachers, but also to governors as they develop their skills to ensure that the performance of the school continues to improve.

You took over leadership of the school at a challenging time. Outcomes in early

years have remained well below the national average for the last three years. Outcomes for pupils at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2 have been well below the national averages for at least two years. Despite some signs of improvement in writing in 2017 at key stage 2, attainment remained below national averages in reading and mathematics. However, progress in 2017 was broadly in line with national averages in reading and mathematics and above the national average in writing. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 in 2017 was well below the national average. Your assessments show that children come into school with skills well below those typical for their age, which makes reaching the expected standard for their age a challenge for many pupils.

Despite these challenges, Alderman's Green is a welcoming and inclusive school with many strengths. The needs of all pupils are quickly assessed and appropriate support is identified. The school's approach to supporting pupils' well-being is comprehensive and effective. Weekly meetings take place between the special educational needs (SEN) coordinator, family support workers and staff from the nurture base. Staff consider all aspects of pupils' welfare and progress, including safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and learning, when deciding on appropriate support.

The school hosts a specialist resource base for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. Where possible, pupils join mainstream classes, with adult support, to access the curriculum. Pupils generally join in well with classroom activities, and teachers adapt their approaches to address particular needs.

The nurture group offers pupils a sanctuary where they can learn to manage their feelings and behaviour so that they can access learning and develop maturity and independence quickly. As a result, they do not miss out on valuable learning time through poor behaviour. This expert support for behaviour management should be shared more proactively so that all staff develop similar skills to meet pupils' needs as effectively as possible.

Governors recognise that the school has a number of priorities for improvement. They are supportive of you as interim leaders and have confidence in your capacity to bring about improvements. However, they also recognise that the school needs a substantive headteacher and they are taking steps to recruit to the post as quickly as possible.

Governors have assessed their skills and have identified areas for improvement so that they can fulfil their statutory responsibilities more effectively. Governing body minutes show that governors are now receiving the quality of information they need to hold leaders to account for the performance of the school. Governors do not currently visit the school regularly enough to verify what they are being told. However, a detailed governance review is under way, which will provide further guidance on how governance should be improved.

Parents are supportive of the school. They say that their children are happy and

safe at Alderman's Green. In their comments, they mirror the school's motto, that staff, 'go the extra mile' to support their children. One parent summed up the view of many parents by saying, 'The teachers are very committed and dedicated to their pupils, therefore bringing out the best in them.'

Parents feel welcome in school and regularly attend events and workshops, such as coffee mornings, toddler stay and play in Nursery or cook and eat well sessions. They say that staff are always willing to listen and take their concerns seriously. Staff know the school community well. They anticipate their needs and work with families proactively to provide early support when it is needed.

The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed in most areas. Attainment and progress in writing improved considerably at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. A focus on handwriting and improved presentation has borne fruit and most pupils now have a good grasp of cursive script. However, less-able pupils still need more support to ensure that they consistently apply their basic skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar accurately in their writing. The teaching of mathematics is now more consistent and effective. However, pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills remain a weakness.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff are vigilant to the signs of abuse, neglect and radicalisation. Any referrals are followed up relentlessly to ensure that the right support reaches pupils who need it. If support from external agencies is not provided promptly, leaders pursue this on behalf of the child. For example, in recent cases where the level of need was originally assessed by external agencies as low, this decision was reviewed and changed through leaders' insistence.

### **Inspection findings**

- Leadership across the school is now more stable, despite the absence of a substantive headteacher. The local authority has taken robust action to ensure that the school gets back on an even keel quickly following what was a destabilising period of change. Support from the interim executive headteacher has allowed you to focus on making the improvements to teaching and learning that are needed. You and the leadership team demonstrate a strong capacity to continue this improvement, through the implementation of detailed and accurate development plans. Governors, the local authority and the executive headteacher all have confidence in the strength and capacity of the wider leadership team.
- Teachers are receiving effective support to improve their practice. However, despite recent improvements, teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. In some lessons, pupils can become disengaged because the teacher does not ensure that activities are sufficiently challenging or engaging for all pupils. Inspection evidence demonstrates that tasks do not always take into account pupils' different starting points. As a result, most-able pupils repeat work they do not need to do, and less-able pupils do not always receive the structure

and support they need to apply their skills consistently, particularly in their writing. All pupils need more opportunities to practise their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.

- Governance is strengthening with support, but governors recognise that more development is needed. The appointment of a substantive headteacher is their priority. They understand that, despite the strengths of the current leadership team, clear strategic direction from a substantive headteacher is crucial to the long-term success of the school.
- Leaders have taken effective action to address the decline in outcomes in the early years. Following a change in leadership and with the support of external advisers, the environment has improved and adults are now supporting children much more effectively to develop their skills. Children enjoy a wide range of activities to develop their writing and number skills. Inspection evidence shows the good progress they have made this year, often from very low starting points. As a result, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development this year has increased so that it is now closer to the national average.
- The approach to teaching phonics has similarly undergone a complete transformation. Staff have received intensive training and support to ensure that all children receive high-quality phonics teaching. As a result, current pupils are catching up with their peers nationally. From very low numbers achieving a good level of development last year, a much higher proportion of pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 this year.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have low prior attainment made considerably less progress than other pupils by the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Work in current pupils' books shows that, in their writing, these pupils make the same mistakes persistently if they are not addressed quickly by teachers. As a result of our lesson observations and looking at pupils' books, it was clear that these pupils need more structured support to improve their progress in writing.
- Boys are now making good progress, particularly in upper key stage 2, as a result of a concerted focus on improving outcomes for boys by providing a range of support. In the past, boys have been excluded from school more often than girls. To address this, youth workers now provide support for behaviour. The introduction of an accelerated reading scheme has also helped to hook boys into reading. For example, they compete to read one million words as quickly as possible. As a result of this proactive approach, the number of fixed-term exclusions has halved over the last year. The number of incidents of poor behaviour has also reduced significantly.
- Progress for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is a complex picture because the school hosts a specialist resource base for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. Some pupils have a wide range of complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorder, social and emotional needs, and communication and language development difficulties. Regardless of their needs, all pupils are supported to participate fully in the life of the school. They all follow the same curriculum as far as is possible and attend trips and after-school clubs. Leaders are exploring how best to demonstrate the small but significant steps of progress made by pupils with wide-ranging needs.

## **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that more pupils achieve the standard expected for their age by ensuring that:

- the quality of teaching continues to improve so that all pupils are fully challenged and engaged throughout every lesson
- pupils who need it receive more structured support to apply their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills consistently in their writing
- all pupils practise their reasoning and problem-solving skills more often in mathematics
- the effective behaviour management strategies seen in the nurture group and elsewhere are shared more proactively with all staff
- governors act upon the recommendations from the recent skills audit and the forthcoming review of governance
- the long-term leadership of the school is stabilised through the appointment of a substantive headteacher.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

We visited lessons together in Reception, Nursery, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I met with you as joint acting headteachers, the assistant headteacher and the interim executive headteacher. I also held meetings with governors, representatives from Coventry local authority, the SEN coordinator, nurture group practitioner, family support workers and the lead teacher from the resource base.

I spoke to parents as they dropped off their children in the morning and took account of 22 responses and 19 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

I observed pupils playing at lunchtime and had a tour of the school with representatives from the school council. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

I scrutinised documents, such as attendance, behaviour and exclusion records, and

checked the single central record and safeguarding documents.

I took account of 45 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.