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28 September 2018

Kevin Medway  
Interim Acting Headteacher  
Sidemoor First School and Nursery  
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Dear Mr Medway

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Sidemoor First School and Nursery**

Following my visit to your school on 12–13 September 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 most 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 May 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 improvement 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 Worcestershire. This letter

will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Claire Jones  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2017.**

- Improve the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that teachers:
  - plan work that meets pupils’ needs, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils
  - identify and correct pupils’ basic misconceptions in grammar, punctuation and spelling
  - provide pupils with a range of opportunities to practise their writing skills in different subjects
  - plan opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and reasoning
  - develop pupils’ use and understanding of subject-specific language and support them to apply their skills across the curriculum
  - insist that all pupils present work to the best of their ability.
- Take urgent action to increase the capacity of leaders and governors to secure improvement by ensuring that:
  - leaders and governors accurately evaluate the school’s performance and develop clear actions that focus sharply on the key areas for improvement
  - leaders and governors set out clearly the precise outcomes that are expected as a result of improvement actions taken, and evaluate the impact of these actions
  - governors hold leaders to account for the school’s performance, including the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - leaders develop and use rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, identify the weaknesses and then take effective action to address them
  - leaders use the appraisal process to hold teachers to account for the quality of their teaching and its impact on pupils’ outcomes
  - assessment systems are fit for purpose and provide accurate information on pupils’ progress and attainment
  - pupils’ achievement is tracked closely to identify quickly any pupils who are falling behind, especially pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils
  - additional funding is used effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities

- middle leaders receive training and support to effectively monitor, evaluate and review their areas of responsibility
  - the curriculum is planned and taught to enable pupils to develop their subject-specific language and skills across a range of subjects
  - governors and all adults working in the school receive safeguarding training.
- Improve the progress, and thereby raise the attainment, of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by:
- monitoring the effectiveness of provision and outcomes for these pupils in class
  - providing training and support to all staff on how to plan to meet the needs of these pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

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.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 12 to 13 September 2018**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documentation. She met with the interim headteacher, middle leaders and four members of the governing body. The inspector spoke to two representatives from the local authority and the chief executive officer of the recently approved academy sponsor. She also held discussions with other leaders and staff, and with pupils. She talked with parents and carers at the start of the school day. The inspector visited each classroom with the interim headteacher to observe learning and to look at pupils' books. She reviewed pupils' work in English, mathematics, history and geography.

### **Context**

At the start of the academic year, an interim headteacher was appointed to lead the school. Two teachers and a new early years leader have also taken up post. Since the previous inspection, six teachers have left the school. A new chair of governors, who was previously a member of the governing body, has been appointed. A significant number of governors have left the governing body and vacancies remain. An academy sponsor has recently been approved.

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

Lack of urgency and clear direction has meant that the pace of improvement has been too slow. Leaders have not responded quickly enough to the findings from the previous inspection. When leaders have taken action, they have not checked to make sure that their actions are making a difference. As a result, weaknesses persist in leadership, teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Leaders have not taken enough ownership of improvement plans written by external partners. As a result, the impact of these plans on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes has been limited. Clear actions are set out. However, plans are not sufficiently focused and do not prioritise the things that will make the most difference. A large proportion of actions involve putting systems in place without consideration of their intended impact. Plans do not show clearly how leaders will measure improvements by their impact on teaching and pupils' progress. Furthermore, these plans have only very recently been shared with staff. As a result, staff have not been clear about the priorities for improvement. At times, they have felt overloaded by trying to address too many things at once.

Leaders have been too slow to address weaknesses in teaching and have allowed poor teaching to continue for too long. The targets set for teachers as part of the appraisal process are too broad. Teachers do not receive the individualised guidance and support they need to secure consistently effective teaching across the school. As a result, weaknesses in teaching continue.

Leaders waited too long before commissioning a full review of the school's use of pupil premium funding. Despite the review being a recommendation in the May 2017 inspection report, it did not take place until March 2018. Furthermore, leaders have not acted quickly enough upon the advice provided in this review. Key recommendations have not been implemented. For example, leaders have not included measurable success criteria in the school's pupil premium strategy. Nor have they checked if additional support for disadvantaged pupils is making a difference. As a result, leaders and governors are not able to evaluate effectively the impact of the funding on improving pupils' outcomes. Disadvantaged pupils continue to make less progress than their peers.

The special educational needs coordinator has set up systems to enable the use of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to be tracked. However, these systems are relatively new, which means that leaders and governors currently do not have a deep enough understanding of where the funding is making the most difference.

Time spent restructuring the governing body resulted in a delay in commissioning the review of governance that was recommended at the previous inspection. This review has now taken place and governors have started to respond to some of the recommendations. Over the past 12 months, a core group of committed governors have benefited from a range of training. This has improved their understanding of the school's performance, along with developing their skills in holding leaders to account effectively. As a result, governors have provided increasing levels of challenge to leaders as the year has progressed. Current members of the governing body demonstrate the necessary skills to move the school forward.

Middle leaders show promise in their roles and are determined to bring about improvements in the school. They have benefited from working alongside an experienced headteacher from another school, who has helped to begin to develop their skills in making checks on teaching. Middle leaders have also attended training to improve their understanding of the standards they should expect from pupils. Consequently, these leaders are developing their leadership skills and have an increasingly accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. Subject leaders make regular checks of pupils' work and teachers' planning to ensure that the full national curriculum is being taught. However, they have not yet undertaken any work to improve the quality of teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All adults, including governors, newly appointed teachers and staff from the building management company, have received up-to-date training in how to keep pupils safe. Staff know the indicators of abuse and are confident in the process to follow should they have a concern about a pupil's welfare.

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

The quality of teaching remains weak. This is because there is no coherent plan for improving teaching. Leaders check the quality of teaching more frequently now. However, they focus on what teachers are doing rather than on how well pupils are learning and how much progress they are making. As a result, teachers have not received the right feedback to improve their skills.

Teaching does not build on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Too often, teachers' expectations of middle- and high-attaining pupils are too low, and work lacks challenge.

Teachers have received guidance about some of the strategies they can use to support the learning of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, they have not had the depth of training and support required to cater effectively for these pupils' needs. Leaders have not made careful enough checks on what is happening in classrooms. Consequently, work in lessons is often too hard for this group of pupils. This slows their progress and results in them being over-reliant on adult support. In small-group work, adults dominate, which means that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make little progress in these sessions.

Weaknesses in the teaching of early reading, spelling and writing continue. The teaching of phonics is not systematic across the early years and key stage 1. It does not match pupils' needs closely enough. Leaders have introduced a new spelling programme. Nevertheless, too often, teachers do not address errors in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar, resulting in pupils repeating these errors. In some classes, teachers provide purposeful opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills and produce extended pieces of writing. However, this is not consistent across the school.

Leaders have introduced a new approach to the teaching of mathematics. This is apparent in some pupils' books, where there is evidence to show that pupils are applying their mathematical knowledge and skills to reason and solve problems. However, leaders are aware that this is not the case in all classes or for pupils of different abilities, particularly those working below the standards expected for their age.

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

Standards in handwriting and presentation are improving. There has been a positive focus on teachers having high expectations of pupils' presentation. Pupils' work shows that teachers across the school are consistently applying these high expectations. As a result, pupils understand the importance of neat presentation and are taking increasing pride in their work.

At the time of the last inspection, pupils had mixed views about behaviour. This

continues to be the case. For example, some say that some pupils play too boisterously at breaktimes and lunchtimes. During the inspection, many pupils were slow to respond to adults' instructions at the end of breaktime. In lessons, some pupils lose concentration when learning does not match their needs.

Pupils' attendance continues to be above national averages. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has declined since the previous inspection. The gap between these pupils' attendance and that of their peers is widening and is larger than that seen nationally.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The previous inspection identified that disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities were making less progress than other pupils and were falling further behind from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. This difference remains. The school's assessment information shows that too few of these pupils are making the progress they should.

Teachers' assessments at the end of key stage 1 in 2018 show that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was well below that of other pupils, particularly in reading and writing. No disadvantaged pupils achieved a greater depth of learning in reading, writing and mathematics.

Teachers have received support to improve their understanding of the standards they should expect of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, the accuracy of teachers' assessments is improving.

Leaders now track pupils' progress across the school. They carry out regular analysis of the achievement of different groups, including pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders meet regularly with teachers to discuss pupils' progress and to identify pupils who are not making the progress they should. However, pupils' achievement is not improving rapidly enough because teachers continue to plan work that does not match pupils' needs closely, especially for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Disadvantaged pupils do not receive the support they need to catch up with other pupils.

### **External support**

Support commissioned by the local authority has been effective. Staff have received training from external partners, and middle leaders have developed their leadership skills as a result of skilful coaching from an experienced headteacher from another school.

Officers from the local authority meet regularly with leaders. They have undertaken reviews of different aspects of the school's work. Consequently, they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They, rightly,

raised concerns about the progress of the school in June 2018 and have challenged leaders about the lack of urgency in the actions taken since the school was placed in special measures. The local authority worked closely with the governing body to secure strong interim leadership of the school at the start of this academic year.

Leaders must urgently address weaknesses in the teaching of phonics by:

- implementing a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics and early reading
- providing staff with appropriate training, support and feedback to ensure consistency in the quality of teaching across the school.