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9 January 2019

Ms Nicky Ross  
Headteacher  
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London  
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Dear Ms Ross

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Cuckoo Hall Academy**

Following my visit with Jeremy Loukes and Joy Barter, Ofsted Inspectors, to your school on 11 and 12 December 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in July 2017. 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 school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Enfield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jude Wilson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in July 2018**

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders at all levels make accurate judgments about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - the assessment system supports teachers in planning to meet pupils' needs and in helping them to make strong, sustained progress
  - the curriculum is reviewed to make sure that it helps pupils to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics
  - skilled governors are recruited and retained to improve the impact of the local governing board
  - governors rigorously monitor the impact of the pupil premium spending on the progress that disadvantaged pupils make
  - teaching assistants are helped to improve their skills and subject knowledge, in order to maximise their impact on pupils' progress
  - provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities supports them to make good progress from accurately assessed starting points
  - the learning environment and the quality of teaching in the early years are improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance is recommended in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 December 2018**

### **Evidence**

This second monitoring inspection focused on the effectiveness of leadership and management; the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; outcomes and the early years provision. During the inspection, meetings were held with school leaders, and different groups of teaching staff. The inspection team had discussions with the chief executive of the trust and one of the trustees, the chair of the academy advisory committee and the school's local authority improvement adviser. Inspectors visited lessons across all year groups, mostly accompanied by school leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils in class and met with a group of pupils. The inspection team also listened to key stage 1 and 2 pupils reading. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. The inspection team evaluated the quality of learning in a sample of pupils' books from across the school, and scrutinised documents provided by the school. Inspectors checked the single central record of staff suitability checks.

### **Context**

Since the first monitoring visit, the school leadership team has changed substantially. The interim headteacher and school consultant left in May 2018. The new and substantive headteacher took up her role in September 2018. A new deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and a special educational needs coordinator also started in September 2018. The school has had some changes in its teaching staff since the previous visit, with seven new teachers joining in September 2018. The rapid improvement board has handed over governance to the newly formed academy advisory committee. The Department for Education issued a Minded to Terminate notice on 22 November to Cuckoo Hall Academies Trust in relation to the school.

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

The school has undergone considerable changes in senior leadership since the previous monitoring visit. This upheaval has slowed the rate of improvement. The new headteacher and her leadership team are open and honest about this. They have a long-term view towards improving the school and know that it needs more than a 'quick-fix' to raise standards.

The new leadership team shows the capacity to improve the school. Leaders are focusing on the right areas. They have done a lot in a short space of time but it is too early to see the full impact of their actions. The trust, staff, pupils and parents support the headteacher wholeheartedly. She has a clear strategy to improve the school and there are early signs that her leadership is having a positive impact.

School leaders are mostly new in post and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Through regular monitoring, leaders evaluate accurately the quality of teaching and learning across the school. They know that their role is primarily to improve the quality of teaching so that pupils achieve what they are capable of and are prepared for the next stage of their education. Lesson observations now focus more on pupils' learning rather than how a lesson is delivered. Teaching and support staff feel valued but know that rapid change is necessary to improve the school.

Leaders reviewed and refined the programme for staff training. External consultants and advisers have continued to work with staff. Tailored programmes for professional development have helped staff to develop aspects of their teaching practice. This has led to some improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics, but there is still too much inconsistency. Consequently, pupils' progress is variable.

Leaders have improved the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and have introduced many new initiatives. Baseline assessment information for all pupils with SEND is now in place. Leaders have used this to put together a programme of additional support which they record in detail. For pupils with the most complex needs, work in lessons does not fully meet their specific and varied needs. Leaders must ensure that changes to SEND provision are embedded so that they can have a lasting impact on ensuring that the provision meets individual pupils' needs.

The rapid improvement board which was set up by the trust shortly after the section 5 inspection has continued to provide robust challenge and support to the school. Board members hold school leaders rigorously to account and provide strategic direction. The rapid improvement board secured the appointment of the substantive headteacher. In November 2018, the board transferred governance to the newly established academy advisory committee. This comprises governors with the necessary skills and expertise to continue the work of the rapid improvement board.

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

Teachers are trying hard to make lessons interesting and stimulating. Year group teams plan lessons together to try and develop a consistent approach. However, the intended learning in lessons is not sufficiently clear. Expectations of what pupils can do and achieve varies. The challenge that teachers provide does not support pupils to make strong progress. This is particularly significant given the considerable gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding as a result of weak teaching over time. In 2018, key stage 2 outcomes remained below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.

Teachers' use of subject-specific language is not always precise enough and subject knowledge is often inaccurate. As a result, pupils can become confused and this

hinders progress. In lessons, teaching does not routinely pick up on pupils' errors and misconceptions therefore remain. This does not help pupils to improve their understanding.

There have been improvements in the teaching of mathematics. Teachers have a better understanding of how to teach mathematics effectively from their ongoing training. Year 1 and Year 6 teachers have benefited from working closely with an external consultant, the impact of which is noticeable in pupils' improved reasoning skills. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers use more practical resources and pupils have a more secure understanding of the topics they have covered.

Teaching assistants can apply the training they have received and have a better understanding of their responsibilities, particularly their role in improving pupils' outcomes. They work more closely with class teachers and together they are increasingly effective in tailoring work to pupils' needs. This needs to be sustained for it to have a meaningful impact on pupils' progress.

Books sampled indicate that Year 6 pupils are making stronger progress than other year groups. In writing and mathematics, these pupils are working at an appropriate standard and work is generally of good quality. Pupils' progress is now tracked carefully. Pupils at risk of underachieving have been identified and are supported through additional focused lessons, such as at breakfast club and on Saturday mornings. Reduced class sizes in Year 6 for three days a week allow staff to deliver more personalised teaching.

Older pupils understand the importance of reading. They are confident readers and now read more challenging texts than previously. Reading lessons, particularly in Years 5 and 6, focus more on specific reading skills, including inference and prediction. Lower down the school, reading is an ongoing area for development. Pupils do not read demanding texts and reading sessions are not well organised. Leaders have plans in place to address this.

## **Early years**

The early years provision has undergone changes in staff and leadership since the last monitoring visit. Leaders have continued to address the priorities through the detailed action plan and have secured improvements in many areas, notably the accuracy of assessment and the quality of staff planning. The outdoors provision still needs some improvement to match the stimulating indoor learning environment.

Baseline assessments are accurate and there is evidence of children making progress across all areas of learning since September. The most able children are challenged well, especially in their writing and phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). The atmosphere in early years is calm and focused; children play purposefully. A range of targeted additional support has been introduced to help

improve children's speaking and listening and social skills. The impact of these programmes is beginning to show in the improved progress from baseline assessments.

The early years leader is ambitious and has set a challenging target for the number of pupils who will achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception. Evidence from lessons and children's work would suggest that the school is on track to meet this target.

### **External support**

The trust has continued to coordinate support to the school. The trust has purchased school improvement services from the local authority. Together, they have planned an extensive programme of support for the school. This includes half-termly reviews of specific aspects of the school and its overall effectiveness. The headteacher has continued the work with other trust schools but has also set up links with schools outside of the trust. This gives staff a range of opportunities to broaden their teaching knowledge and observe good practice. The trust and the local authority have provided specialist advisers, for example in early years and mathematics, to advise school leaders and deliver high-quality staff training.