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Mrs J Leishman
Principal
The Hill Primary Academy
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Dear Mrs Leishman

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Hill Primary Academy

Following my visit with Janet Lunn, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 9 January 2019, 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in October 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.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the transition monitoring board (TMB), the chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnsley. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2016

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - timelines in action plans are met and improvements are then monitored rigorously to ensure they are effective
 - governors hold leaders to account for timelines and the effectiveness of improvements
 - middle leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and early years leader, have the skills and knowledge so that they are more effective in carrying out their roles
 - accurate information is gathered on pupils' attainment so that it can be used to follow pupils' progress and inform teachers' planning
 - safeguarding is more effective, including improved monitoring and successful implementation of procedures
 - a new marking policy is implemented effectively so that teachers give pupils feedback that will help them improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' achievements by ensuring that teachers:
 - use accurate information on pupils' attainment to plan their lessons so that they can identify and meet pupils' different abilities and learning needs
 - deploy extra adults more effectively to promote pupils' learning.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - a greater proportion of pupils attend school more regularly
 - teachers and more pupils follow the guidance and procedures as noted in the behaviour policy.
- Improve outcomes and ensure the welfare of pupils in the early years by ensuring that:
 - all welfare requirements are consistently met and any risks are quickly identified and addressed
 - leaders and managers in the early years are effective in identifying and prioritising actions to improve provision
 - an accurate assessment system is fully and effectively implemented and it is used to inform teaching and promote improved outcomes.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 9 January 2019

Evidence

The inspectors met with the principal, the vice-principal, the assistant headteacher/coordinator for special educational needs (SENCo), the assistant headteacher with responsibility for key stage 1 and phonics (letters and the sounds they represent), the early years leader and the inclusion and safeguarding manager. In addition, the principal, vice-principal and inspectors visited lessons to observe teaching, learning and assessment. An inspector evaluated the progress made by pupils in their English and mathematics workbooks since the beginning of the current academic year. The inspectors also reviewed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during breaktimes and around the school site. Discussions were held with the chief executive officer and members of the TMB. A telephone conversation took place with the vice-chair of trustees from the Astrea Academy Trust (the trust). The inspectors scrutinised a wide range of information, including information about pupils' attainment and progress, punctuality, attendance and behaviour. Parents discussed the school with an inspector at the beginning of the school day. The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including minutes of TMB meetings, leaders' monitoring records and reports outlining support from the trust.

Context

A head of school, seconded from the trust, took up post on 1 September 2018 and left the school on 31 December 2018. An assistant headteacher with responsibility for key stage 1 and phonics joined the school in September 2018 and left the school very shortly afterwards. An assistant headteacher with responsibility for key stage 1 and phonics, seconded from another school within the trust, joined the school's staff in January 2019. Following the consultant SENCo's departure at the end of the summer term 2018, an assistant headteacher/SENCo joined the school in September 2018. Two of the trust's 'supernovas' (supply teachers) are teaching in the school until the end of the academic year.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The trust, following a lengthy period of volatility in leadership, has eventually secured a strong leadership team. The principal and vice-principal have high expectations and lead by example. They, much to the delight of the parents, have established a stable and settled teaching staff.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas that require further and rapid development is honest and uncompromising. Their strategic improvement plans outline the actions to be undertaken and the timescales for completion clearly.

The consultant SENCo established many effective systems and procedures in relation to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Since

taking up the post at the beginning of the current academic year, the new SENCo has developed the school's provision further. She has delivered training to teachers and teaching assistants; audited support plans; reorganised the support for pupils; observed the quality of teaching, learning and assessment; and evaluated the progress that pupils are making incisively. The provision for pupils with SEND is improving rapidly.

Leaders now check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment well. For example, the leader for mathematics regularly observes lessons, scrutinises pupils' workbooks and talks to pupils about their learning. She is taking effective action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics further.

Members of the TMB have a full understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require immediate development. They have supported leaders well in their efforts to establish a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. Currently, members recognise that pupils' progress is being hampered by gaps in their existing knowledge and have challenged leaders to develop pupils' basic skills rapidly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Leaders have streamlined the school's marking and feedback procedures. Pupils benefit from the additional and immediate teaching that is provided when they find new concepts difficult to understand.

The deployment of teaching assistants is a strength of the school. These skilled professionals support pupils' learning effectively.

An emphasis on teaching the basic skills is paying dividends. Pupils' handwriting, together with the way in which they present their work, is improving rapidly. In addition, pupils are beginning to solve more complex mathematical problems correctly because their knowledge of number bonds and multiplication tables is improving.

Parents have noticed that their children are now much more likely to be taught by the same teacher every day. They, and their children, appreciate this stability.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The inclusion and safeguarding manager, ably supported by members of the TMB and the trust, has transformed the culture of safeguarding throughout the school.

Pupils now attend school much more often. Their attendance last term was 95.1% compared to 93.9% for the same period in 2017. Similarly, the number of pupils that are persistently absent has reduced. There were 71 persistent absentees in the 2017 autumn term and 34 in 2018. In addition, there has been a striking

improvement in pupils' punctuality. Pupils were late on 1,114 occasions during the 2017 autumn term and on 119 occasions in autumn 2018.

Pupils' behaviour is also much improved. The school is now a calm and orderly environment for learning. Pupils are interested and engaged in lessons. They are eager to learn, make up for lost time and fill gaps in their knowledge.

Outcomes for pupils

The proportion of children who reached a good level of development at the end of the early years in 2018 was below the national average. This is also true for the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, that achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2.

Improved teaching, learning and assessment, together with an emphasis on the basic skills, is leading to pupils making better progress currently. In mathematics, teachers follow the school's curriculum route consistently. Pupils who do not understand new concepts are given additional support immediately.

Pupils' workbooks show that standards are beginning to rise in writing. Pupils' handwriting is much improved. They present their work neatly. Their confidence as writers is beginning to blossom as they learn and use their new writing skills. For example, more are beginning to write well-punctuated, complex and multi-clause sentences.

The provision for phonics and reading in the early years and key stage 1, which was identified as a priority for further improvement at the time of the third monitoring inspection, continues to require development. The proportion of pupils that achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check remains below the national average. Teachers do not use their knowledge of pupils' learning well to plan for their needs. For example, during the inspection a group of pupils were taught a sound that they had already been taught and mastered some months ago.

External support

There has been no external support for the school since the last monitoring inspection.