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Ms Stephanie Field
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Dear Ms Field

Special measures monitoring inspection of Busill Jones Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 May 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 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 April 2018.

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

the local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose

the school's improvement plan is 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 Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Spilsbury
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in April 2018

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - urgently reviewing the school’s safeguarding practices so that systems and the grounds keep pupils safe, and statutory requirements for safeguarding are met
 - all leaders forming an accurate understanding of the school’s performance to better inform their drive for improvement
 - speeding up the rate at which teaching improves by making accurate checks to identify precisely what teachers need to do better
 - ensuring that professional development opportunities for teachers are closely linked to their individual needs
 - improving the quality of learning tasks across the curriculum so that pupils gain a secure knowledge and understanding of what they learn
 - making sure that all governors fulfil their responsibilities, including systematically reviewing the school’s performance to gain an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses
 - ensuring that governors provide the right sort of challenge to senior leaders.
- Raise pupils’ achievement by:
 - significantly accelerating pupils’ progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2
 - accelerating the progress made by children in the early years so that more reach the standard necessary to be well prepared for the start of Year 1
 - speeding up the progress made by the most able pupils so that many more reach the higher standards in their work throughout the school
 - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make much faster progress and reach standards closer to those reached by other pupils nationally.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - raising teachers’ expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that time is better used in lessons
 - moving pupils on to harder tasks much more quickly and when they have a secure grasp of their learning
 - making sure the work set for the most able pupils is hard enough

- making accurate assessments of pupils' achievements
 - teachers consistently ensuring that lessons capture pupils' interest and guiding pupils back to their work when they become distracted
 - providing pupils with opportunities to read a wider range of more-challenging texts, ensuring that phonics teaching is of a consistently high standard, and strengthening the teaching of higher-order comprehension skills, particularly in key stage 2
 - providing opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in different subjects and teaching the skills pupils need to improve their writing
 - ensuring that most pupils work securely at the standard expected for their age in mathematics and have opportunities to deepen their understanding through reasoning and problem-solving tasks.
- Improve pupils' personal development by:
- significantly raising pupils' attendance and reducing the high number of pupils who are frequently absent from school
 - reducing the very high level of absences for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - deepening pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own.

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

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 8 to 9 May 2019

Evidence

The inspector met with the interim headteacher, senior leaders, the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer (CEO) of SHINE Academies, and the chair of the governing body and another governor, both of whom are also local authority officers.

The inspector observed lessons and looked at pupils' books jointly with senior leaders. A range of documents was considered, including the school's improvement plan, the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium, an external review of leadership and management, minutes of governing body meetings, records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, and the school's information about current pupils' progress and attainment. The single central record of checks made on staff was also reviewed.

The inspector talked to pupils in lessons, in the playground and the dining hall and met with a small group of pupils. Parents' views were gathered at the beginning of the day and the inspector met with two parents individually.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in April 2018, there have been numerous changes to staffing. Following the inspection, an academy order was issued by the Secretary of State for Education and SHINE Academies was proposed as the sponsor. In July 2018, the previous headteacher left the school and staff from SHINE Academies started to work with the school in September 2018. An interim headteacher was appointed from another school in the multi-academy trust (MAT).

Between April and September 2018, very little progress was made against the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. However, since September, the rate of improvement has accelerated. At the point at which the trust started to support the school, there were nine supply teachers covering the majority of the classes. The interim headteacher, with the support of the executive headteacher, the CEO and chief operating officer (COO) of the trust, has worked tirelessly to recruit permanent teachers. There are now only three supply teachers employed by the school. All other classes have permanent teachers and two additional teachers have been appointed to start in September 2019.

There has been further turbulence in the governance of the school. At the beginning of the autumn term 2018, all members of the governing body resigned. Walsall local authority formed a new governing body consisting of two local authority officers and the CEO and the COO of SHINE Academies. As a result of significant delays, the school is still in the process of an academy conversion.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Despite the considerable challenges, the interim headteacher and leaders from the trust are tackling many of the weaknesses identified at the school's previous inspection. They have systematically identified what needs to happen to bring about the necessary improvements. New leaders have an accurate view of the school. They agree with the judgements in the previous inspection report. When they took over the school, staff morale was at an all-time low. Now, with many new teachers, all staff are on board with the improvement journey.

Leaders' evaluation of the quality of education and the school improvement plan now represent an accurate view of the school. The actions set out in the plan are bringing about rapid improvements to teaching and there are signs that pupils are starting to make much stronger progress. The review of the school's use of pupil premium funding was carried out shortly after the previous inspection and identified accurately the shortcomings of previous spending decisions. Current spending decisions are based on robust evidence of what works to close the gap for disadvantaged pupils. It is too early to see evidence of impact of the new plans.

At the last inspection, safeguarding practices were ineffective. Procedures needed to be reviewed so that the systems and the grounds keep pupils safe and statutory requirements for safeguarding are met. Safeguarding practices have since been completely overhauled and procedures are now rigorous and robust. Concerns about pupils' welfare are raised promptly by staff and followed up by leaders. Cases are tracked rigorously, and detailed records are maintained. The site is more secure because the entrances are supervised at the beginning and end of the school day. All gates are locked during the school day.

The quality of teaching across the school is improving rapidly. With support from the trust, teachers have been recruited to fill vacancies and the majority of teaching staff are new to the school. Nevertheless, leaders have set out clear expectations and provided comprehensive training for all staff, including supply teachers, to improve their practice. This has included moderation of teachers' assessments in writing and mathematics across the schools in the MAT, good-practice visits, team teaching, joint planning and focused training.

The curriculum has been reviewed and additional, much-needed resources have been purchased, such as more-challenging reading books, a systematic phonics scheme and a new mathematics teaching scheme. In this way, teaching is becoming more consistent. Learning tasks across the curriculum are now more strategically planned to ensure that pupils develop secure knowledge and understanding in a wide range of subjects. However, this is not yet fully developed.

The governing body was originally established by the local authority as a short-term measure to facilitate the school's conversion to an academy. However, as this process has been delayed, this temporary solution has not been reviewed. The

governance structure is not fit for purpose. Governors cannot hold leaders to account effectively because they are not impartial. Leaders are not effectively challenged.

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers now have a better understanding of what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of each key stage. This is because many teachers are new to the school and have come from schools across the trust where these expectations are already firmly established. Leaders also ensure that teachers' subject knowledge improves through regular moderation exercises and more rigorous assessment processes. For example, teachers now use reading criteria to assess pupils' reading skills. This means that teachers' feedback to pupils is more focused and helps pupils understand how to improve their reading further.

Previously, teachers' assessments were not secure. Leaders have ensured that these are now more accurate. Leaders now have confidence in teachers' assessments. However, there are still inconsistencies in teaching. Teachers do not all ensure that time in lessons is used as productively as possible. The most able pupils are not given sufficiently challenging work by all teachers. When they finish their tasks and are ready to move on, there is sometimes a delay while they wait for the teacher to move them on. This means that learning time is still being lost for these pupils.

In most lessons, pupils are now engaged in their work because teachers design tasks that capture their imaginations. In the early years, for example, children spent the morning looking for the giant's clothes in the outdoor area. They talked excitedly about the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. However, this excitement is not seen in all lessons across the school. In some lessons, pupils become disengaged because the work lacks challenge or because they need additional support to complete the tasks set.

Phonics teaching has been revised and is now much more systematic. Teachers' stronger subject knowledge helps them to assess pupils' learning more effectively. Pupils are grouped according to their stage of phonics skills development and these groups change according to pupils' needs. Well-established routines support pupils' learning in phonics sessions. Pupils apply their decoding skills well, with support from their teachers. They develop fluency with practice and repetition.

Pupils are now studying a broader range of more-challenging reading texts. Reading records show that pupils read often. The huge investment in reading books is paying off. Pupils are motivated to work their way through the reading bands.

Opportunities for pupils to practise writing skills are still variable, although there is

now an expectation that all pupils will write every week in response to the class text. Evidence in pupils' books shows that for most pupils, there are more opportunities for them to write in a variety of styles. However, pupils often make basic errors. They need to have even more opportunities to apply their skills in correct spelling, punctuation and grammar so that this becomes automatic.

In mathematics books, there is evidence that pupils now have more opportunities to apply their skills and consolidate their knowledge through reasoning and problem-solving tasks. Staff are more frequently asking pupils to prove their answers and explain their reasoning. However, some pupils are disadvantaged by their weak reading skills, which presents a barrier in solving word problems in mathematics. This is particularly the case for the older pupils, who still have gaps in their knowledge from previous poor provision.

In the early years, as a result of recent changes to leadership, children are starting to make stronger progress. Staff are now supported more effectively to direct children's learning and prompt their thinking by asking more-challenging questions. Staff in the early years have also received support to assess children's learning more effectively. Records of pupils' work are improving. Learning journeys show that children now have more opportunities for mark-making. The outdoor space has been refreshed and is now a more inviting resource for children to explore. However, this is still an area for further development.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

There is an improving picture in terms of pupils' attendance. Last year, attendance was well below the national average. It is now much closer to the national average. This has been achieved by staff working closely with parents to support them through challenges they may face. Relationships between staff and parents have improved considerably since September. Parents say they now feel welcomed into school. They are very appreciative of the support now being provided by staff.

Pupils now want to come to school because behaviour has improved, classes have stability in teaching and lessons are more engaging. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced considerably. Pupils say that the new behaviour policy has made expectations much clearer. All pupils now know the consequences of poor behaviour. They say that children support each other more. They say that everyone is accepted and bullying rarely happens.

At the last inspection, leaders were asked to deepen pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own. Leaders have started to address this. Pupils learn about different faiths in religious education. Through the introduction of a new voting system, pupils are presented with moral and philosophical dilemmas which pupils discuss in class and then vote on. This supports pupils' personal development and welfare effectively. Other initiatives to deepen pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own are only just being introduced. For example, an art project

with another school with a more diverse ethnic mix of pupils is planned, which will culminate in an exhibition in the Walsall Art Gallery.

However, there is more to do to ensure that pupils develop a better understanding of the diverse cultures that exist in modern Britain. Leaders acknowledge that the forthcoming review of the curriculum will provide an opportunity to enhance this aspect of provision.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' progress in 2018 at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with the national averages. However, pupils' attainment at the end of key stages 1 and 2 was well below the national averages in all areas. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check was also well below the national average, as was the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in the early years.

Current teachers' assessments indicate that a higher proportion of pupils will achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check this year. However, this is still likely to be significantly below the national average. Leaders acknowledge that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception class is unlikely to improve this year, because the improvements in provision have not had time to have a significant impact on children's learning.

In reading, writing and mathematics, the proportion of pupils likely to achieve the expected standard for their age by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 this year is likely to be significantly below the national averages once again. Progress is unlikely to improve for some time because, according to recent baseline assessments, previous assessments of pupils' prior attainment were insecure and represented a generous view of pupils' achievements. Disadvantaged pupils are achieving as well as other pupils in the school, but there is still some way to go before they close the gap with other pupils nationally. Despite this, there have been significant gains in some year groups, which demonstrate evidence of impact of leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is particularly the case in mathematics.

Work in pupils' books shows that current pupils' progress is patchy. A lack of consistency in the quality of teaching has had a negative impact on progress in many of the classes. This is because for many pupils gaps in their basic skills still need to be addressed before they can achieve the standard expected for their age by the end of the key stage. As a result of the historic lack of challenge for the most able pupils, very few pupils are working at the higher standard currently, particularly in mathematics.

External support

Since the last inspection, key members of staff have been seconded to the school from academies across the trust, including the interim headteacher, the family support worker and the senior family liaison lead. Comprehensive support for the headteacher is provided by the executive headteacher and the CEO of the trust. Extensive support has also been provided by the trust for personnel, recruitment and business management.

The local authority has provided two senior officers to serve on the interim governing body. The local authority's statement for action has been judged to be fit for purpose. However, the local authority no longer provides a school improvement adviser, so progress has not been monitored effectively.

SHINE Academies are currently providing a great deal of support to the school. However, due to delays in the legal process, the school has not yet officially joined the trust. This represents a considerable commitment and risk on the part of the trust as the local authority have not put in place a formal agreement.

The review of governance took place when the previous governing body was in post, so its findings are no longer relevant. The interim governing body has focused largely on the intricacies of the academy conversion process, not on the school's improvement journey. As a result, the local authority is not monitoring progress against the statement of action effectively. Governors acknowledge that the constitution of the governing body is problematic as there is currently no objective representation. The chair's position as a local authority officer represents a conflict of interest.

- The local authority should take steps to strengthen governance and resolve the academy conversion process as quickly as possible.