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Mr P Smith
Acting Headteacher
Springfield Primary School
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Dear Mr Smith

Special measures monitoring inspection of Springfield Primary School

Following my visit with Rob Hackfath, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 June 2016, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in May 2015. 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 not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board and the director of children's services for Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in May 2015

- In order to ensure pupils achieve well in all year groups, improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good and better by making sure that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement and plan activities that are suitably challenging for the most-able pupils, those that are disabled and have special educational needs, and those that are in the early stages of learning to speak English
 - activities in all subjects help pupils to practise, extend or learn new skills
 - activities in the Nursery are purposeful and move children's learning on
 - all staff include girls in class discussions and give them time to respond to questions
 - teachers give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work when marking.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by making sure that:
 - all adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, particularly as pupils move around the school and during break times
 - all pupils learn to resolve disagreements without resorting to using inappropriate and hurtful language
 - lunchtime supervisors respond quickly to any concerns pupils may have and encourage pupils to cooperate and play together.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by making sure that:
 - all leaders have the skills required to carry out their roles effectively and are held to account for the difference they make to teaching and pupils' achievement
 - leaders effectively check the impact of teachers on the learning of different groups of pupils, and identify the precise actions individual teachers should take to help pupils make rapid progress
 - senior leaders provide governors with pertinent information about the achievement of different groups of pupils, so that governors can effectively hold all senior leaders to account for the progress of different groups of pupils
 - pupil premium funding is specifically targeted at meeting the learning needs of disadvantaged pupils
 - pupils in the Nursery are always taught by a qualified teacher.

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 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 third monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 June 2016

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, acting headteacher, deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and the early years leader. Meetings were also held with three members of the interim executive board (IEB), including the chair, a consultant headteacher and representatives of the Greet Teaching Alliance who provide external support for leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with the assistant director of education for Birmingham City Council and the director of continuous school improvement for Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) which is commissioned by the local authority to manage and oversee school improvement across the city. An inspector met with a group of pupils and both inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons. An inspector checked safeguarding and staff vetting procedures.

The focus for this monitoring inspection was to gauge how well the teaching is improving and how staffing instability affects pupils' learning and progress. It also focused on the quality of monitoring by school leaders to see what impact this is having on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

Context

There have been significant changes to staffing. Eleven teachers have left since September 2015 and long-term supply teachers, covering for absent staff, were teaching in five classes at the time of this inspection. Some staff are on a phased return after extended leave and some teach part-time. The school is currently led by the acting headteacher and executive headteacher of Robin Hood Academy. Both these leaders will be leaving at the end of this term. At the time of reporting, the local authority is appointing another temporary acting headteacher to start at the beginning of the autumn term. These arrangements have not yet been finalised. Birmingham local authority is also negotiating the proposed change to academy status for the school in response to an academy order from the Department for Education. The IEB is currently managing these arrangements with the support of BEP in order to secure permanent leadership and governance of the school. The substantive leaders at the school are the deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and an early years leader, each of whom have responsibility for managing different phases or key stages.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive headteacher and acting headteacher from Robin Hood Academy have established clear roles and responsibilities and have shared their expertise with the school's substantive leadership team. However, despite some improvements to the frequency and organisation of monitoring of lessons and pupils' work, the combined efforts of external partners working with substantive leaders have not had enough impact on improving teaching quickly enough. Substantive leaders do not yet have

the necessary skills or capability to monitor and support improvements in the quality of teaching. Teaching remains too weak in parts of the school. Moreover, despite the best efforts of the acting headteacher and executive headteacher, as reported at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, staff absenteeism is still disrupting and hampering improvements.

Pupils in Year 1 to Year 4 have experienced too much disruption caused by staff absence. Added to this, insecure and inaccurate evaluations of the teaching in these phases of the school undertaken by leaders are not having enough impact on sustaining improvements to teaching. The judgements leaders have made about teaching from the evidence of pupils' work and lesson observations are inconsistent, vague and lack focus.

Feedback notes following leaders' observations of lessons show that teachers receive confusing or unclear messages about the key weaknesses of their teaching. Although leaders have stepped up their monitoring, the deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers do not pinpoint with sufficient accuracy where improvements are needed after observing teachers and support staff during routine lesson observations. During feedback conversations after their lessons were visited during the inspection, some teachers stated that they were given unclear messages and advice from leaders.

The leadership of the early years has improved markedly and is much sharper and better organised than previously. This is benefiting the children, particularly in the three Reception classes where the teaching and support provided is effective in raising standards in early literacy and mathematics. The management and oversight of the early years provision provided by the early years leader and supported by an expert adviser from Arden Academy has been effective in turning around what was previously weak provision.

As reported at the previous monitoring inspection, many teachers attend school regularly and absenteeism among staff is reducing. The continued use of a consultant headteacher who has specific responsibility for dealing with staff absenteeism relieves this added burden from the acting headteacher. The school is now working in close collaboration with the legal team and human resource department of the local authority. However, repeated long-term absenteeism remains a significant issue and is hindering pupils' learning.

The school's budget remains in significant deficit, yet leaders are still using supply teachers to cover for long- and short-term absence despite considerable non-teaching capacity among senior leaders. The school cannot afford to use external supply staff to this extent. This remains an issue that is not being dealt with effectively or consistently by leaders and the IEB.

Even though opportunities are being provided by external partners with local primary schools for teachers to see and share best practice, teachers are not being directed enough towards this as an opportunity to improve their own teaching.

Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and remain effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

In two phases of the school, key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 (Years 3 and 4), pupils are underachieving because the teaching is not effective or consistent enough to improve pupils' attainment and progress over time. The acting headteacher has introduced useful assessment systems to the school. Leaders use this assessment information to track and monitor pupils' progress and performance in reading, writing and mathematics. Assessment information is now accurate and this is an improvement since the previous monitoring inspection. However, in too many lessons, teachers and support staff are not checking or assessing pupils' work and progress to find gaps or misunderstandings in pupils' learning. As a result, the tasks planned for pupils do not build on what they already know and can do. In some classes, teachers use assessment consistently well to group pupils by ability and they mark pupils work diligently with helpful prompts for improvement, in line with school policy. Nonetheless, this is not yet common or established enough in all classes. Learning also stalls when a supply teacher takes over from the substantive class teacher and the work covered repeats what has already been done.

Evidence from pupils' work in books and lesson observations show that teachers are not providing enough extension work or providing sufficient challenge for the most able pupils. This remains a significant area for improvement and was cited at the time of the school's full inspection that placed it in special measures. In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils in Year 1 reinforced their knowledge of clock times but the most able pupils who could already tell the time were not provided with sufficient challenge or the opportunity to master what they already knew. In other classes, many pupils were observed using mental number calculations with confidence and skill to work out money problems but the work set for them was too easy and did not extend their understanding and skills further.

Teaching assistants are not effective enough to support pupils with additional learning needs. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not being monitored closely enough by leaders and some records are out of date so that the oversight and management of this provision remains weak. Pupils with additional learning needs are still not making enough progress.

There have been good improvements to the early years provision in both the Reception year and Nursery, although as reported at the previous monitoring inspection, children do much better and make more rapid progress in Reception than they do in the Nursery. The teaching in the Reception Year is stimulating, productive and exciting for the children.

This is an improvement and builds on the good progress referred to at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. Children throughout the early years are starting to make good rates of progress in early literacy, particularly their writing, and in mathematics. Some of the independent writing in the Reception Year is of a higher standard than that seen in Years 1 and 2. The most able children in the Reception classes can read their own writing aloud with confidence and skill. Writing is well

punctuated and handwriting is accurate, reflecting consistently high expectations of teachers and support staff. During the inspection the children excitedly shared with an inspector their investigations into small animals and caterpillars. 'Look at this,' stated one child enthusiastically holding a magnifying glass up to a jar containing suspended chrysalises, 'It is growing and will soon become a butterfly – look.' The pace of learning and enthusiasm expressed by the children in the Reception classes is also starting to be reflected in the Nursery because the early years leader is now exerting more influence here as well.

In some classes in Years 5 and 6 the teaching is more consistent than previously, expectations are higher and the pace of learning is good. This is also evident in pupils' work where their writing and mathematics books show improving progress over time. This was reported at the previous monitoring inspection but disruption to pupils' learning and progress still exists because of staff absence in some Year 5 or Year 6 classes.

External partners and the senior leadership team introduced new ways of teaching writing and this is having a positive impact on pupils' independent writing across the school. However, the quality and quantity of writing completed in lessons depends on the expectations set by teachers. It still remains the case that in some classes pupils' writing and mathematics work contains too many errors that are left uncorrected and pupils still make repeated spelling or calculation errors. In too many classes, teachers and support staff are not intervening enough to help pupils improve their work. The most effective and productive writing is more consistently evident in Year 5 and Year 6 classes, although increasingly pupils in other years are also writing more than previously and with increasing confidence and accuracy.

Problem-solving tasks in mathematics lessons are now more challenging than previously. However, this happens only in lessons where expectations are high and where teachers expect pupils to complete tasks on time, allowing opportunities for pupils to set out the methods they have used and correct errors.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The acting headteacher and executive headteacher have been successful in forging productive links with parents and carers and have put in place effective measures to improve pupils' behaviour. Most of the parents spoken to by inspectors are feeling more confident in the temporary senior leaders. They say that they are approachable and visible and have confidence in the leaders' ability to keep pupils safe and well behaved. Some parents are disappointed that the acting headteacher and executive headteacher will be leaving at the end of this term because they have noticed that pupils' attitudes to behaviour and learning have improved. Parents are right about improvements in behaviour. Senior leaders and staff now adopt consistent behaviour management systems and expect pupils to treat each other with respect and courtesy at all times.

Behaviour outside of lessons continues to be much better than at the time the school was placed in special measures. Supervision at breaktimes continues to be

vigilant and effective and pupils told an inspector that, 'We now line up for lunch in an orderly way and this is better organised than before.'

Pupils are proud to wear their uniform and they enjoy celebrating the achievements of their classmates when they receive awards. They feel safe and secure in school and many told inspectors that they like their teachers and support staff. There are good relationships between adults and pupils. Attendance and punctuality is improving and is celebrated each week. Attendance rates are edging closer to last year's national average and pupils are more punctual now than previously.

School councillors and monitors contribute to the school community and help other pupils to settle into school. Pupils told an inspector that they trust their teachers and form friendships with other classmates. Thoughtful assemblies and special topics about democracy, fair play and British values make a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils are usually well behaved and attentive in lessons and are very patient, even when the teaching is not demanding enough of them. Pupils get fidgety, bored and restless when expected to sit for long periods listening to repeated or prolonged instructions. Pupils do not usually disrupt other pupils when, for example, they have to wait for long periods after completing work that was too easy for them. This compliant behaviour exists in those lessons where teachers do not set high enough expectations for work and progress. Some workbooks show that pupils repeat what they already know in lessons covered by supply staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' work and progress over time show that they make accelerated progress in those classes where the teaching is consistent and effective. They make slow or inadequate progress in those classes where the teaching is undemanding, mundane or disrupted by staff absence. The overall effect is that pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The children in the Nursery and Reception classes join the school with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in language and literacy. Although progress in the Nursery class is not yet fast enough, it is improving. Children in the Reception Year make good progress. The percentage of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is below average but has improved on the previous year.

The results of the most recent national checks for Year 1 pupils in phonics (the sounds that letters make) was similar to last year and remains below average. Reading and writing standards by the end of Year 2 are too low, although there is evidence of some improvements to pupils' independent writing. Pupils make variable progress overall in Years 3 and 4, depending on the consistency of teaching and the stability of staffing. Pupils are starting to write more often and independently with increasing accuracy, although many have a lot of ground to catch up. In Years 5 and 6 pupils' work and progress improves, particularly in writing and mathematics.

However, progress stalls when there is disruption to the teaching in some classes.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make inadequate progress and this remains a significant weakness. Despite the support and planned interventions, records show that pupils are not always supported effectively enough and this was evident during the inspection in some of the lessons observed.

The most able pupils are not reaching high enough standards in reading and writing. More of them do better in mathematics but this is not consistent across classes and year groups. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others, as reported last time, is too wide, particularly in reading and writing. Now that assessment information is more accurate and identifies pupils who need to catch up, there is some evidence of pupils being grouped by ability more accurately in lessons. This helps teachers plan work that matches pupils' different abilities and learning needs but inconsistent expectations still exist. The pace of learning in lessons varies too much across the school so that outcomes for pupils remain inadequate overall.

External support

The involvement of the acting headteacher and executive headteacher from Robin Hood Academy has been effective in dealing with many serious weaknesses that existed at the time the school was placed in special measures. However, senior leaders and the interim executive board are in no doubt that the issues still facing the school are significant. The school's substantive senior leadership team is not demonstrating that it has the capacity to secure enough improvements without significant external support and intervention.

The head of continuous school improvement from the BEP and the assistant director of children's services of the local authority are now taking urgent steps to deal with the difficulties facing the school. At the time of previous monitoring inspections it was reported that the local authority was slow to take action. The IEB, in partnership with the local authority, has given careful consideration to a proposed handover to another acting headteacher. In addition, the IEB is working closely with the BEP and the senior officers of the local authority to determine how best to proceed with the Department of Education's academy order.