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Mrs Lisa Somerville
Acting Principal
The John Curwen Co-operative Primary Academy
Leeds Old Road
Heckmondwike
West Yorkshire
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Dear Mrs Somerville

Special measures monitoring inspection of The John Curwen Co-operative Primary Academy

Following my visit to your academy on 13–14 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 academy’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 January 2018.

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 trust’s statement of action is fit for purpose.

The academy’s improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer or equivalent of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children’s services for Kirklees. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Wardle

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons, particularly the most able
 - improving the accuracy and consistency of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress
 - closely defining the role played by educational teaching assistants (ETAs) in classrooms so that they effectively support pupils' needs
 - ensuring that feedback given to pupils is in line with the school's own policies and enables pupils to improve their work.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - developing more effective strategies to improve pupils' attendance overall, and to decrease the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school
 - improving the curriculum so that pupils develop a better understanding of different faiths and cultures, particularly those represented within the school locality
 - providing pupils with a wider range of opportunities to report incidents of bullying to staff and further developing the curriculum so that pupils are clear about how to identify bullying behaviour.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - increasing the progress made by disadvantaged pupils by carefully focusing the use of pupil premium funding
 - accelerating the progress made by the most able pupils by increasing the levels of challenge in the work set for this group.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders have sufficient time to lead and manage the school
 - increasing the effectiveness of systems currently in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - refocusing targets within the current school development plan so that they more closely match the areas in need of improvement
 - increasing the accuracy of systems in place to measure pupils' progress
 - implementing effective training to help staff to improve pupils' attendance more rapidly

- developing stronger relationships with hard-to-reach families in order to improve pupils' attendance.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be carried out.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 13 September 2018 to 14 September 2018

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with a range of colleagues at school, including the acting principal, acting vice principal and phase leaders. I met with members of the local governing body and the trust. I also spoke with a representative from the Co-op Academies Trust, the preferred sponsor for the school. I checked safeguarding arrangements and scrutinised the system used to ensure that adults in school are safe to work with children. I spoke to colleagues responsible for safeguarding and checking attendance. I considered the development plans as presented by the trust and the school. I looked at documents relating to the quality of the curriculum, the monitoring of teaching and notes of visits from colleagues working with the school to support its improvement.

I conducted joint observations in lessons with school leaders and looked at pupils' work in exercise books. I talked to pupils formally and informally at breaktime and lunchtime. In addition, I spoke to parents and carers at the beginning of the school day and took into account the 82 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. I visited the new provision for pupils who need additional emotional support before they can learn successfully in lessons.

Context

Since the school was judged to require special measures, the principal has left. The school is currently being led by an acting principal and acting vice principal. After the inspection in January 2018, the trust and local governing body were swift in brokering leadership support, for two terms, from a local leader of education. A stand-alone academy with a multi-academy trust structure, the school is currently within the Y-OUR Co-operative Academies Trust. Members of the trust have been in contact with the regional schools commissioner and the school is due to be sponsored. The preferred sponsor has been named as the Co-op Academies Trust and, since September 2018, the school has been receiving support from this trust. An executive trust leader is now working with senior leaders in school, and a package of professional development for teachers and teaching assistants has also been organised.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting principal and her team, together with the support of the trust and that provided by the local leader of education, have successfully 'steadied the ship' since the last inspection. There is now much greater clarity on how leaders are going to improve provision at school. Since January, senior leaders have successfully focused on improving standards of behaviour and on developing a positive ethos at school. School leaders have also been effective at improving the school's standing in the

local community. School leaders acknowledge, however, that the rates of improvement in the quality of teaching and in the progress that pupils are making are not quick enough. The rates of progress that pupils made in 2018 were weaker than those in 2017. The pace of improvement needs to increase if the school is to be removed from special measures at its next full inspection.

One of the most striking improvements since the last inspection has been the way in which the acting principal and her team have developed positive relationships with parents. One parent told me how she feels that 'leaders in school listen to our views now', and that this was mirrored by others when I spoke with them before school. The senior team are visible in the yard every morning, and there is a palpable sense that most parents are 'on side' and want to do their part in helping the school to move forward. The number of responses on Parent View for this monitoring inspection was much higher than for the inspection in January, for example, which shows an increased commitment to the school. The school community was galvanised by the summer fayre this year, and parents are now often seen in school for assemblies, 'stay and play' events and parents' forums, where all are given the opportunity to 'air and share'.

The acting principal has acted with urgency to ensure that safeguarding is effective. School leaders work well with outside agencies to ensure that more vulnerable pupils are kept safe. They are increasingly tenacious in ensuring that these pupils have access to the support that they need. Staff training in issues linked to safeguarding is up to date, and policies and procedures are compliant with statutory requirements. What is more, adults are now on the 'front foot' in identifying any potential safeguarding issues. Regular meetings take place where staff share potential issues so that adults can be vigilant and raise early concerns if needed. A full safeguarding audit has taken place and any issues identified are addressed.

Staffing at school has been strengthened, although some instability remains. School leaders now have enough time to discharge their management and leadership responsibilities. The role of phase leaders has been enhanced, and they are developing their skills in monitoring the quality of provision. Changes in team structures have ensured that all adults at school are now aware of their roles and responsibilities. In addition, teaching assistants have been deployed in line with their strengths to a greater extent. More time has been made available to improve communication between class teachers and teaching assistants so that everyone knows their role in lessons each day.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose. Leaders acknowledge that it could be even sharper by tightening 'milestones' by which progress can be evaluated. It is not always crystal clear by whom, when and how progress will be monitored. School leaders agree that the next area of focus for improvement needs to be on the development of accurate assessment systems. Once these are in place, members of the trust will be able to challenge leaders as to exactly where progress and

standards need to improve. Class teachers will also be able to identify where individual pupils need to catch up.

The new 'pupil premium champion' at school has started to develop strategies to help disadvantaged pupils. However, school leaders have not yet commissioned the pupil premium review, as required in the previous inspection, and assessment information is not yet accurate enough. Any actions would currently, therefore, from the perspective of leaders, be difficult to evaluate.

Preparations for sponsorship by the Co-op Academies Trust have recently started in earnest and an executive trust leader is working with senior leaders at school for the equivalent of two days per week. The preferred sponsor's ethos aligns well with that of the current trust. Members of the trust and members of the local governing body are supporting the school effectively through the sponsorship process.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching remains very variable. The acting principal has changed the structure of teaching groups. This has enabled school leaders to relaunch expectations of behaviour, and to try to ensure that pupils are more focused in class. School leaders know where stronger and weaker teaching lies in school, and they are ensuring that all teachers are developing their skills through professional development programmes. Teaching in early years and in upper key stage 2 is strong. However, some significant pockets of weak practice still exist at school. There is still some uncertainty as to the future staffing of classes, as senior leaders are in acting positions.

The executive trust leader has correctly identified the need to focus on the quality of assessment in order that gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge can be identified more precisely. Expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons can then be raised accordingly.

Where learning is stronger, teachers question pupils well. Here, they give instructions precisely, and the content of the lessons stretches pupils. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, a variety of activities were well-matched to different abilities in the class. This helped pupils to practise ordering numbers. Pupils were fully engaged and made rapid gains in their learning. In other classrooms, however, pupils' behaviour is less well managed and activities less well planned. Because of this, the pace of pupils' progress is not as rapid as it could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

It is in this area of school life that the greatest positive impact of changes can be seen.

Changes that the acting principal has made to the way that pupils come in and out of the building have made the school a calmer and more ordered environment. Pupils no longer wait in lines before coming into school, and this has led to a decrease in scuffles in the queue. Pupils enter the school via the entrance closest to their classrooms, so they can get down to work more quickly. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are staggered so that there are fewer opportunities for pupils to get into mischief, as there is a greater staff to pupil ratio. These, and other pre-emptive behaviour management strategies, have led to a decrease in low-level incidents around the building.

The acting vice principal, with support from the acting principal, has developed a new anti-bullying policy and associated processes and procedures. Under the guidance of the local leader of education, she has engaged parents, pupils and staff in developing the policy. There is a clear line of sight between when and where incidents of bullying used to take place and subsequent changes to systems and school rules. Some pupils and parents are still concerned about bullying, but real green shoots are in evidence. Similarly, the acting principal is developing a new behaviour policy and ensuring that parents, pupils and members of staff are involved in its development, giving their perspectives. The maxim 'ready, respectful, safe' is at the centre of this policy.

The electronic system, used for logging and tracking pupils' behaviour, is now embedded and used effectively by members of staff. The acting principal and her team are now able to easily spot patterns and intervene accordingly. If themes are identified, direct teaching takes place in circle time for teachers to challenge certain behaviours. This is a good example of how the system is used to help pupils to improve their behaviour.

As a result of these developments, the frequency of fixed-term exclusions has dropped significantly. Standards of behaviour are improving overall. However, in some classes, pupils' attitudes to learning still need to improve.

Systems to check rates of attendance have been overhauled, as have processes for ensuring that pupils arrive to school and to lessons on time. However, there has been only a limited impact on pupil absence and the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent at this point. Nonetheless, the tighter systems have ensured that school leaders are able to safeguard vulnerable pupils more effectively.

Teachers and other adults ensure that pupils are taught about different faiths and cultures through lessons, assemblies and other events. British values of tolerance and respect are modelled by members of staff, and celebrated through the curriculum. For example, during the inspection, children in Reception were being taught about different types of family when reading together as a class. Children enjoyed comparing who was in their families with each other. Teachers and other adults have also participated in specific training in how to develop their

understanding of the religious education curriculum in order to help to deepen pupils' understanding of similarities and differences.

Outcomes for pupils

The progress that pupils made by the end of Year 6, in 2018, was weaker than those in Year 6, in 2017. Unvalidated information indicates that the progress that pupils made in reading and writing was below national averages and that the progress they made in mathematics was well below national averages. In addition, the standards that many pupils reached by the end of key stage 1 and the end of key stage 2 were low. This means that many pupils were not adequately prepared for the next stages in their education. Changes in school leadership during the school year meant that some members of staff from Year 2 and Year 6 were no longer able to teach their classes. This is one of the reasons for the decline in performance.

School leaders and members of the trust and local governing body are aware that this decline needs to be arrested. They understand the rates of progress that pupils are making need to radically increase in order for the school to improve. This is the key reason that I have judged that leaders and managers are not currently taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Nonetheless, there were some relative strengths in outcomes for pupils in 2018. Most-able pupils made greater progress than others, and some disadvantaged pupils made relatively strong progress. School leaders are implementing strategies to increase the progress that different groups of pupils make, although these are in their infancy. For example, some disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 are involved in a project to develop their reading skills. They are receiving extra support through Year 6, which will continue after their transition to secondary school in Year 7. The newly established base, 'thrive', which focuses on pupils' emotional and social development, is increasingly effective at ensuring that pupils in class are ready to learn.

External support

Senior leaders and members of the governing body are positive about the impact that the support of the local leader of education has had. Specifically, he has supported improvements in the effectiveness of safeguarding and standards of behaviour. His guidance and advice to improve systems and structures, and changes to how pupils and parents access the school building, have had a positive impact. In addition, his research into developing anti-bullying policies have been beneficial. The local authority has provided some support in auditing safeguarding at school.

The formal support that the school is now given comes from the Co-op Academies Trust, as preparations are made for sponsorship. Members of the trust and senior leaders have confidence in the executive trust leader, who now supports the school.