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Ms J White
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The Crescent
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Dear Ms White

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Woodlands Primary School

Following my visit with Rebecca Clayton, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 10–11 October 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 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 October 2017.

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 action 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 interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Doncaster. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gina White
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2017.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all leaders contribute effectively to the monitoring of pupils' progress, in particular by different groups, and use this information to improve pupils' outcomes
 - leaders and governors set high expectations for the achievement of pupils and that they review pupils' performance accurately
 - leaders are focused on making rapid improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in reading and mathematics
 - governors rigorously question the actions taken by leaders and check the effect of this work on improving outcomes for pupils
 - those with responsibility for improving outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well trained and can check this aspect of the school's work effectively
 - leaders of all subjects know and understand their responsibilities well enough to contribute effectively to school improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in reading and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring the assessment of pupils' progress is accurate and based on clear evidence of what pupils know, understand and can do
 - ensuring that teachers use the information they keep on pupils' learning and progress to plan work that is appropriately challenging and enables pupils, particularly the most able and those receiving additional support, to make at least good progress
 - making better use of the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils in their learning
 - providing opportunities for pupils to use and explain their reasoning behind how they solve mathematical problems.
- Increase the proportions of pupils at all stages, including the early years, who attain the highest standards by more accurately identifying all those pupils with the potential to do so.
- Improve the quality of teaching in the early years to ensure it is consistently good.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:

- improving the rates of attendance of all pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that they at least match national averages
- improving pupils' behaviour in and between lessons so that there is no disruption to learning across all classes.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 10 October 2018 to 11 October 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and groups of pupils, the chair of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers as they brought their children to school or collected them at the end of the day.

Context

Turbulence in the leadership team, and in teaching, continued since the inspection in October 2017. A Year 3 teacher left in January 2018. The deputy headteacher, a Year 6 teacher, mathematics leader and special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) left the school mid-year. An interim leadership team was put in place with internal staff filling the positions. An associate headteacher from another Doncaster school supported the school from January to July 2018. Three teachers and one support staff left at the end of the summer term. In September 2018, five teachers joined the school and became class teachers in Reception, Year 2, Year 4 and Year 5. A deputy headteacher also joined the school. A revised leadership team was established from the beginning of September. The governing body was disbanded in May 2018 and replaced by an interim executive board in June 2018. A teaching assistant and a Year 4 teacher have left the school since September 2018. At the time of the inspection, two supply teachers were covering for a long-term absence and a vacancy in Year 2 and Year 4 classes respectively.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Despite the significant turbulence in staffing, the school has made steady advancement over the last year. In part, this is due to a well-constructed action plan that is sharply focused on the aspects of the school that need to improve. The headteacher has drawn upon the support and expertise of external partners and local authority officers to implement changes to the way in which mathematics, reading and writing are taught. As a result, improvements in behaviour and attendance, and attainment and progress for most groups of pupils, are evident across the school. This is especially so in the early years, Year 1 and Year 2 classes.

Senior leaders' checks on teaching are focused on ensuring that teachers comply with revised policies and are putting training into practice. New staff, including temporary supply teachers, are clearer about what is expected of them and report greater confidence in meeting the school's standards.

Subject planning is firmly in place in English and mathematics. Training and support for teachers have begun to improve the quality of teaching and learning in reading,

writing and mathematics. Teachers' expectations of what pupils need to know and understand in these subjects have increased throughout the year. However, they are at early stages in meeting the needs of all pupils.

Some experienced leaders and teachers, who joined the school in September, have quickly got to grips with their roles. For example, the deputy headteacher has begun to strengthen teaching and support individual teachers.

Action to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and or disabilities has yet to show significant impact on their learning. This is because their individual needs are not identified well enough in current support plans and consequently the additional support provided to them is not tailored sufficiently to help them to move on quickly in their learning.

The new SENCo is well trained and experienced. Since September, she has made a strong start to identify needs more precisely for a small number of pupils. The subsequent support plans she has developed are highly focused on the right actions to meet individuals' needs.

The school has been slow to distribute responsibilities for leadership of subjects, but has done so from September. New subject leaders are currently not contributing to monitoring pupils' progress. The action plans they have developed show a preoccupation with identifying what is taught in the subject, but less curiosity in raising attainment or accelerating progress for different groups of pupils.

For much of the year, a lack of strategic leadership by governors has impeded the pace of improvement. Little use has been made of the findings of the external review of governance and this represents poor value for money by the governing body. The new interim executive board recognises there is much still to do to embed the improvements and make a greater difference to the achievement of all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged. They are acting quickly to do so and have the skills and knowledge to hold the headteacher and other leaders to account. Minutes of meetings and discussions with them demonstrate that they are rigorous in their questioning, challenge and support of leaders.

The spending of pupil premium funding is not targeted sufficiently across the school to enable all pupils who need the support to make rapid gains in their learning. Staff in the early years classes are starting to identify and support disadvantaged children more effectively as they enter the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving in response to training in new methods to support the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Lessons are purposeful and teaching is becoming more consistent.

Teachers in Nursery, Reception and key stage 1 classes are making effective use of the training and pupils in these classes are progressing rapidly.

The new early years leader has brought additional momentum to improve the quality of provision. Staff support children's learning well. Children's next steps are identified carefully. They are supported effectively in a range of activities that take place indoors and outside. Some parents report seeing much positive change in what their children know, and can do, since starting school.

Pupils, in all classes, have more opportunities to work on mathematical problem-solving and reasoning. Teachers' demonstrations of how to work through problems and explanations of their calculations are helping most pupils to know what is expected of them.

The accuracy of assessment has improved. This is largely in response to opportunities for teachers to check the judgements that they make about pupils' work alongside those of teachers in local schools.

Most pupils are keen to learn. Pupils say that their teachers 'help them to remember' and they are giving them work which pushes them or challenges them. Some pupils feel they are learning more.

Pupils are starting to use the new resources that are available in each classroom to help them learn. Generally, pupils are at early stages in doing so independently. However, pupils in Year 3 have secure knowledge and experience to be able to look up words and check their spellings using dictionaries. They say they learned to use them in Year 2 but are now able to use them independently.

In discussions with inspectors, pupils in Years 3 and 4 reflected on their work. They identified that they need more help in speaking and answering questions, being able to write quickly and to organise their ideas when writing. The standards of presentation are variable within classes across key stage 2 and pupils are not sure what is expected of them.

Checks on pupils' learning and progress by leaders and teachers are not sharply focused on the gains pupils are making in their learning, and most importantly, where gaps remain.

Information about the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work is not used well enough by teachers to plan work that is appropriately challenging. Teachers are not confident enough to adapt work in mathematics and writing to challenge the most able pupils, or those who are ready to move on.

There is little evidence of additional, targeted support to help pupils overcome disadvantage. Consequently, outcomes for this group of pupils continue to be weak.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Behaviour expectations are clear and known to all staff and pupils. Pupils generally follow the higher expectations and consistent routines are established around the school. Attendance was just below national averages in 2017/18 and is improving more quickly this term in response to the high priority given to it by leaders and all teachers.

Leaders have staggered breaktimes and lunchtimes, which has helped to ensure that the school is calm.

Respectful relationships and conversations are evident between staff and pupils. Pupils play together, harmoniously, in well-planned activities.

Behaviour in lessons, just prior to lunchtime and towards the end of the day, remains less strong. Some low-level disruption was seen during the inspection and staff worked hard to keep pupils engaged.

A small number of pupils disrupt the learning of others and slow learning for some pupils. Despite recent training, teachers do not yet have secure strategies to help the small number of pupils who need additional support and specialist help with their behaviour. Individual plans do not identify precisely enough how to support these children when they are angry or to help them with social, emotional and mental health issues.

Attendance is tracked and monitored well. Procedures to follow up absence have been strengthened substantially. They are having a strong impact in reducing persistent absence and attendance is rising. Parents report that they are very clear about what is expected of them due to the well-defined policy.

Outcomes for pupils

Increasing numbers of children achieved a good level of development in the early years at the end of their Reception Year. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for phonics improved in 2018 compared to the school's performance in 2017. More pupils at key stage 1 achieved greater depth to their learning in reading, writing and mathematics in the summer tests. More pupils in Year 6 achieved the standards expected for their age in 2018 compared to the school's performance in 2017.

Despite these modest successes, progress and attainment are not improving rapidly by the end of key stage 2 and pupils continue to be poorly prepared for their move to secondary schools. Pupils' attainment in mathematics, reading and writing remains well below national standards.

Learning in Year 3 classes and in Year 6 was adversely affected by teacher absence and changes of teacher. Consequently, school information shows that pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics slowed in the spring and summer terms.

Pupils who are disadvantaged make less progress in school than other groups. Disadvantaged pupils who took national tests in 2018, at the end of Year 6, achieved less well than other pupils nationally.

External support

Doncaster local authority has begun to implement its support plan for the school effectively. The substantial support commissioned through the deployment of leaders in a local school and use of specialist subject leaders has helped to maintain teaching and leadership during a period of turbulence in staffing. The local authority has used its powers effectively to bring a positive change to governance. Training brokered by the local authority has helped to build staff knowledge of general behaviour techniques and is beginning to help staff. However, further techniques to enable them to help a small number of pupils who need additional support are also required. Checks of teacher judgements in tests have enabled the school to build a stronger foundation to assessment practice.