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5 October 2017

Mrs Moira Cross
Executive headteacher
Wood End Primary School
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Warwickshire
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Dear Mrs Cross

Special measures monitoring inspection of Wood End Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27–28 September 2017, 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 December 2016.

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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plans are 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 education advisory board, the chief executive officer of Community Academies Trust, the regional schools commissioner

and the director of children's services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve progress and thereby raise attainment throughout key stages 1 and 2, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching in key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that teachers:
 - raise expectations and the level of challenge for pupils across the curriculum, especially for the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils
 - plan work which meets pupils' needs, including the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - adjust tasks as necessary during lessons in response to pupils' understanding and their rates of progress
 - provide work that maintains the pupils' interest so they have positive attitudes to learning
 - provide high-quality phonics teaching, based on a consistent approach
 - carefully match reading books to pupils' abilities
 - give pupils regular opportunities to write at length
 - plan work that develops pupils' subject-specific skills across the curriculum.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the multi-academy trust, governors and school leaders understand the accountability structure of the school and their roles and responsibilities
 - school development activities are carefully prioritised, sharply focused on the key weaknesses in school and accurately evaluated to ensure that they are having an impact on improving outcomes for pupils
 - weaknesses in teaching are identified and the right support and guidance is put in place
 - pupils' progress is assessed accurately across the curriculum, and assessment information is used carefully to plan work at the right level for all pupils and to provide support quickly to any who may be falling behind
 - additional funding is used effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
 - training and support is provided for leaders to enable them to become effective in their roles
 - disruption in lessons is minimised so that it does not stop pupils from learning
 - the curriculum is planned and taught to provide pupils with opportunities to develop their skills across a range of subjects

- school leaders' roles and responsibilities, particularly those of the head of school, are reviewed to provide them with enough time to carry out checks on teaching, learning and assessment and provide support where it is needed.

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.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 27 September 2017 to 28 September 2017

Evidence

The inspector met with the executive headteacher, associate headteacher, middle leaders, teaching assistants, pupils, members of the education advisory board and the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.

In addition, the inspector spoke with parents on the playground at the beginning of the school day. The inspector looked at pupils' books, various school documents, reports from educational consultants and the school's website. The single central record of checks on staff was also checked.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection in December 2016, there have been several staff changes. The headteacher has resigned and in key stages 1 and 2 all but one of the teachers have left and been replaced by new teachers. A new senior leadership structure is in place and an executive headteacher and an associate headteacher have been appointed. The executive headteacher has oversight of two schools: Wood End Primary and Dordon Primary. She divides her time between the two schools. The associate headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day running of Wood End Primary and is based permanently at the school. The early years staff team remains unchanged.

In the spring term 2017, the governing body was replaced by an education advisory board (EAB), so the review of governance recommended by the most recent inspection report was not necessary. The long-term intention is to form one governing body for both Wood End and Dordon primary schools.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the section 5 Ofsted inspection, the leadership structure at the school has been completely redesigned. There is now complete clarity about key leaders' responsibilities. Job descriptions and lines of accountability are crystal clear and the executive headteacher makes sure that everyone is doing their jobs properly. She also makes sure that staff receive appropriate training and expects everyone to do their best. She gives praise where it is due and challenges underperformance or low expectations when necessary.

The EAB, which includes the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, has put routines in place to check that the information it receives about the school's performance is accurate. Records from EAB meetings show that the board receives information about the school's progress against key priority areas and asks many questions.

The multi-academy trust has confidence in the current quality of school leadership and evidence gathered on this inspection confirms that this confidence is well founded. This improved senior leadership is also bringing out leadership qualities in others. Both the executive and associate headteachers recognise the capabilities of staff and nurture leadership potential. Recently appointed middle leaders have been quick to rise to the challenges set for them. They have responded positively to the training provided and their improvement plans focus on the right things. These plans set out clear criteria for success and are regularly revisited and checked to make sure actions are leading to higher standards in the classroom. Furthermore, subject leaders routinely examine pupils' work in books and check that assessment information is correct. They also make sure that all staff are following agreed school policies.

There is, however, scope for them to be more involved in checking on classroom practice. Currently, this is done by the executive and associate headteachers. These senior leaders have an informed understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning. They give staff clear feedback that leaves no room for doubt about what is working well and where improvements are required. A current focus, for example, is to make sure all staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' classroom behaviour. Teachers and teaching assistants have received guidance from an educational trainer and behaviour consultant and also get the chance to work with staff from other schools in order to share and learn from effective practice. Indeed, this outward-looking and collaborative approach is indicative of a significant culture shift in the school. In response to leaders' direction and raised expectations, staff are now keen to improve the way they work.

Information about how well pupils are doing in reading, writing and mathematics is increasingly accurate. A whole-school tracking system provides leaders, the EAB and the trust with an overview of current standards. In writing, in particular, significant shortcomings in assessment have already been tackled. That said, there is still more to be done to sharpen up teachers' day-to-day use of assessment in class. Currently, the pitch of work is still somewhat hit or miss.

In May 2017, the school commissioned a review of the use and impact of pupil premium spending. This review made several useful recommendations but also noted that the academic progress of disadvantaged pupils was still a major concern. In response, leaders have made sure all staff are aware of this key group of pupils and have made some changes to staff deployment. For instance, teaching assistants' responsibilities have been changed so that they are more involved in helping pupils to learn rather than just doing classroom jobs. These staff are now showing an increased capability as they step up to their new roles. There is some quiet concern from a few staff that that the character of Wood End Primary School has changed. However, all agree that change was needed and that they all have a part to play in forging a fresh new identity for the school.

Leaders' focus on improving pupils' behaviour, supported by staff training, is making a difference. In class, pupils show respect to adults and have a growing appreciation of the link between effort and success. Older pupils report that some poor behaviour, such as shouting out or arguing, does still happen but not as much as it used to. During this inspection, no instances of bad behaviour were observed, but in some cases pupils did look bored, inattentive or confused because they did not understand teachers' explanations or instructions.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is improving. Classrooms have been smartened up, displays of work are up to date and interesting to look at and pupils are being made to work harder. Staff report that more is expected from them and that they are given the support they need in order to improve what they do. Across the school, consistent routines are in place and this has already brought about some change for the better. For instance, every day there is a half-hour phonics session for all the younger pupils, which is taught without fail. Furthermore, staff involved have been given proper training about what to do and the English subject leader keeps careful records of pupils' progress. The 2017 Year 1 phonic check results, which were considerably stronger than the previous year's, are testimony to the positive impact of this systematic and disciplined approach.

Indeed, there are signs that the school's approach to reading is changing. Pupils act as librarians in the school's central library. Staff expect all pupils to have a suitable reading book with them each day. The school's large stock of books, many of which are currently stored on tall shelves in corridor areas, are soon to be relocated to classrooms where pupils can see and use them. Pupils say they are given reading targets and that they read regularly in class and are encouraged to read at home. The actual impact of these current and planned actions on pupils' reading standards and interest in books remains to be seen and will be a key focus of the next monitoring inspection.

So far, efforts to improve teaching and pupils' progress in writing have not met with a great deal of success. The accuracy of teachers' assessment has improved, as is illustrated by the 2017 end-of-key-stage 2 writing assessments, which were more or less in line with the standards seen in pupils' books. However, the quality of pupils' handwriting is poor. In addition, the quality of some teachers' handwriting does not present an acceptable model for pupils to follow.

Work in books shows that many pupils are heavily reliant on adult support and templates to help structure their writing. There are few opportunities for pupils to write at length and, in several classes, pupils do not readily use dictionaries or other reference materials to help them with their work, even when these are close to hand.

There are some exceptions. In a few cases, the quality of written work is impressive. The most able pupils are starting to make the most of the more interesting work they are now being given. For example, the quality of a Year 3 pupil's newspaper report about a mysterious dent in the school gates was inspired by quick-thinking teaching that capitalised on an unexpected event in order to inject interest and purpose into a lesson. In another instance, pupils' letters to a Roman emperor offering persuasive arguments against gladiator fighting captured some highly eloquent phrases.

Nevertheless, teachers are not making the most of these well-chosen ideas. In the main, this is because, in several classes, teachers do not do enough to find out what pupils already know. Instead they focus heavily on giving out instructions or going over heavy-handed explanations that confuse some pupils and slow down others. In either case, this approach means teaching is not pitched at the right level.

Having said this, there are instances when staff do ask well-judged questions, listen carefully to pupils' responses and keep a close eye on how they are coping with their work. Such strategies are a regular feature of phonics teaching and allow teachers to refine and adjust their teaching on the spot. Consequently, misunderstandings are picked up quickly and pupils who already understand are pushed on further. This sort of practice is not so apparent in other lessons.

The support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much improved. A new special educational needs leader has been appointed and she has taken action to improve the school's procedures for identifying and supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are now required to make frequent checks on these pupils' progress and have to keep leaders informed about how well any extra support is working. Record-keeping has been tightened up and communication with parents and professional services that offer specialist help is also much better than it was. In short, staff now have a better understanding of these pupils' needs and are able to target extra support more effectively. As a result, the progress made by these pupils is beginning to speed up.

In the summer term 2017, the school curriculum was revamped to make sure that pupils cover a broad and relevant range of subjects. Pupils report that teaching in subjects such as religious education or science now follows on more logically from one lesson to the next rather than jumping from one thing to another. The school has sought some specialist input for the computing curriculum to ensure key skills and knowledge are taught. However, the progression of skills in non-core subjects from one term to another and from one year to the next is still in need of significant improvement. Currently, pupils are not building up their skills in subjects such as geography or history in a sequential or secure way. Understandably, leaders are currently focusing most of their energies on lifting standards in English and mathematics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

As already noted, teaching is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour but some inattentive behaviour does persist, especially when teaching is pitched at the wrong level.

School leaders have taken a firm stance on behaviour matters. They have introduced clear and simple rules and regularly remind pupils of the importance of respect.

In addition, they have given pupils specific jobs to do in order to instil a sense of responsibility and pride in their school. For example, pupil 'ambassadors' watch out for other pupils on the school bus and e-safety monitors help their peers to stay safe online. Pupils say that the rules are fair and that they now have to do a lot more work in class. Most pupils look smart, although a few wear training shoes, which goes against the school's uniform code.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 remain too low. In 2017, key stage 1 results were lower than those achieved in 2016. At key stage 2, however, test results in reading and mathematics rose. The standard reached in writing was lower than that seen in 2016, although this was mainly due to more accurate assessment in 2017 than any decline. These end-of-key-stage results show that standards of attainment are still below age-related expectations. Progress measures, too, were weak.

That said, the progress being made by current pupils is showing signs of improvement. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are responding well to the improved levels of support. Leaders' more attentive tracking of all pupils' progress means that slow progress and gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are being picked up sooner. There is still a lot of catching up to do. Currently, teaching staff are still not making the most of the available assessment information to plan their teaching or to respond to pupils' different needs in class.

External support

The school benefits from support from schools within the multi-academy trust and has sought external advice from educational consultants. This support is fit for purpose and is proving beneficial.