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Mrs Sue Perry and Mrs Diane Malyon
Joint Acting Headteachers
Buildwas Primary School
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Dear Mrs Perry and Mrs Malyon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Buildwas Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 and 21 October 2015, 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 which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement which 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:

The school is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Shropshire.

Yours sincerely

Mitchell Moore

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2015

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching in Years 1 to 6, and so accelerate pupils' progress, especially in reading and writing, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - accurately assess pupils' work and reading, and use the results to set pupils appropriately challenging tasks and provide them with reading books that are well matched to their ability
 - mark pupils' work so that all pupils know where they have made errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar; and check that pupils have corrected their mistakes and do not repeat them in future work
 - have higher expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve, especially in the quality of their presentation and handwriting
 - check more frequently that pupils are on task and working hard.

- Ensure as a matter of urgency that the school has robust systems for keeping pupils safe by:
 - providing all staff with the appropriate guidance on how to keep children safe
 - keeping records of allegations of child abuse for the requisite time
 - carrying out more frequent fire drills
 - appointing a member of staff to be responsible for the achievement of looked-after children
 - keeping a record of pupils who are excluded from school.

- Improve the provision for, and progress of, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs by:
 - appointing a special educational needs coordinator and ensuring he or she is suitably trained and qualified
 - providing the support to which those with statements of special educational needs are entitled
 - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants are given the guidance they need on how to support pupils in Year 6 who have difficulty managing their behaviour, so that they do not disrupt lessons.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - establishing secure systems for keeping records that are easily transferable on a change of leader
 - developing a system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress as they move through year groups
 - carrying out more frequent checks on the quality of teaching
 - setting more demanding targets for teachers' performance
 - drawing up plans for improvement that address the school's main weaknesses

- developing the roles of subject leaders in monitoring, evaluating and leading their subjects
 - using the pupil premium funds to support those pupils eligible for such support and carefully evaluate the impact it has.
- Improve governance by ensuring that governors:
- take actions more quickly when concerns about leadership arise
 - meet statutory requirements in respect of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, safeguarding pupils, providing information to parents on the school’s website, and in reports on their children’s progress and provision for looked-after children.

An external review of governance and of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 October 2015

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the joint acting headteachers, teachers, groups of pupils, parents, members of the governing body, including the chair, a representative from the local authority and had a telephone discussion with the local leader of education (LLE) who is supporting the school.

Context

The acting headteacher in post at the time of the last monitoring inspection completed her secondment to the school at the end of the summer term. Two joint acting headteachers joined the school at the start of the autumn term. Two new members have joined the governing body. The local authority is currently undertaking a public consultation on a proposal to close the school. The governing body are in discussions with the Department for Education about the school converting to become a sponsored academy.

Outcomes for pupils

Outcomes for pupils across the school are improving, particularly in reading and mathematics. Pupils join the school with skills and understanding at least typical for their age. They make good progress in the early years and start Key Stage 1 with above average levels of attainment. Standards have risen in reading and mathematics in both key stages. Progress has not been as swift in writing, particularly for the most-able pupils.

Gaps are closing for disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This is because accurate assessments are made of these pupils and work is carefully planned to enable them to make good progress.

The proportion of children who attained a good level of development at the end of early years in 2015 rose for the third consecutive year and is higher than the national average. An above average proportion of children exceeded the expected levels of development in the prime areas of learning. In the national screening of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), a high proportion of pupils in Year 1 met the required standard.

At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2015, standards attained by pupils in reading were in line with the national average at the expected level. A higher than average proportion of pupils attained at expected level in mathematics and at the higher levels in reading and mathematics. In writing, the proportion of pupils who attained

the expected level at the end of KS1 was higher than average while the proportion attaining the higher level was average.

The end of Key Stage 2 assessments in 2015 show that all pupils made at least the expected amount of progress in reading, writing and mathematics and a higher than average proportion made more than expected progress in reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils that attained at least the expected Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with the national average. A higher than average proportion of pupils attained the higher Level 5 in reading and mathematics. No pupils achieved a Level 5 in writing.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching is improving because teachers are becoming more accurate in the assessments that they make of pupils. Assessment information is being used more effectively to inform the plans that teachers make for pupils' learning. The school is developing its approach to assessment without levels. There are clearly articulated expectations of the rates of progress that pupils should be making in each year group. The LLE and local authority staff have supported the development of assessment arrangements. Teachers benefit from opportunities to moderate their assessments with colleagues from other local schools.

Pupils demonstrate improved attitudes to learning and apply themselves to their work. This is because teachers have higher expectations of pupils and are providing work which is more closely matched to the pupils' learning needs and aptitudes. Pupils listen well and respond quickly to instructions and requests from their teachers. Classrooms are positive environments and are well equipped to support learning.

Teaching in the early years continues to be a strength of the school. Children make good progress because provision and teaching are adapted to ensure that all children are supported and challenged to achieve well. The leader of early years has used assessment information to identify the precise areas of learning that need further focus. For example, in order to improve children's resilience and persistence in their learning, children in Reception were exploring and investigating how to stop the witch's hats that they had made from falling off. Phonics is taught well and provides children with firm foundations on which to build their reading and writing skills. This continues into Year 1 where children are provided with many opportunities to write. As a result, pupils display very positive attitudes to writing and it is evident from their workbooks that they are making good progress.

Thorough assessments have been made of all pupils' reading abilities and a new approach to the teaching of reading is about to be introduced.

There have been noticeable improvements in marking. The best examples of marking follow the school's own guidance closely. In these examples it is clear to pupils what they need to do to improve and pupils have the opportunity to put this advice into practice. This is not yet consistent across classes and subjects. Where marking is less effective, the comments made by teachers are not specific enough to guide the pupil in making the improvements needed. Teachers do not always check whether pupils have responded to the feedback they have been given.

Teachers now include specific activities which focus on grammar and this is most effective when it is taught in the context of pupils' wider literacy work. Spelling errors are now identified by teachers and pupils have their own individualised spelling lists to learn. There is evidence that this is leading to improvements in pupils' ability to spell and use grammar accurately.

Leaders have followed the advice from the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium in adapting provision for disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are carefully assessed and precise teaching programmes, which include interventions and class-based support, are provided. These programmes are carefully evaluated and changes are made where the support provided is not having the desired impact.

Teaching assistants are well briefed by teachers and provide effective support, particularly to the lower-achieving pupils. Useful systems of communication between teaching assistants and teachers have been developed. Teaching assistants are clear about how to support pupils and teachers get feedback on the extent to which the pupils have benefited from the activities.

Where teaching is less effective, teachers have not been as precise as they need to be about what the pupils are intended to learn in a lesson. This results in the activities that pupils are given not being sufficiently focused on what they are expected to achieve.

Teaching does not consistently challenge the most-able pupils to achieve as well as they are capable of. Too few opportunities are provided for extended writing and pupils have not developed the stamina needed to write at length. There is little evidence of pupils being given the opportunities to apply their mathematical learning and deepen their understanding through investigations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Behaviour has continued to improve because there are now consistent expectations from staff and a secure system of rewards and consequences. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They play together well at lunchtime and appreciate

the new equipment that they have been provided with. Pupils told the inspector that 'it makes lunchtimes more enjoyable'.

Parents are confident that their children are safe at school and pupils feel well cared for. The processes and systems introduced since the inspection in January 2015 are now well embedded and contribute effectively to the safety of children.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The joint acting headteachers have been swift to get to know the school and have an accurate view of the strengths and priorities for improvement. They bring considerable experience to the school, particularly in coaching teachers to improve. The school's action plan is kept under regular review and is a key tool in driving improvement. This plan has been utilised well in supporting the transition of leadership, minimising any negative impact on the direction of the school.

Parents are increasingly positive about the school. They are supportive of the work that governors and staff are undertaking to improve the school. All members of the school community remain focused on seeing the school improve and the current uncertainties around the school's future have not deflected this commitment or the actions being taken.

Subject leaders have all implemented new ways of working in the areas for which they are responsible. They now need to have the opportunity to monitor the impact of these initiatives so that they can be sure that they are having the desired impact and make any necessary modifications.

Governors provide very effective strategic leadership, challenge and support to leaders. They continue to address the areas for improvement identified in the review of governance. The governors' work plan ensures that all responsibilities are planned into the year. Governors have engaged with a comprehensive programme of training. New governors have been carefully selected to address gaps in the skill base of governors identified through audit of current members. Governors receive accurate, detailed and timely information from leaders, with a strong focus on evidence of impact. This complements governors' own direct monitoring. Governors use this information effectively to challenge leaders for further improvements.

External support

The acting headteachers and governors are very appreciative of the effective support that is being provided by the local authority. The local authority advisor has ensured that the transition between the previous acting headteacher and the current acting headteachers has been smooth. The half-termly monitoring committee meeting that the local authority adviser attends provides a good opportunity to review progress and evaluate the impact of the action plan. Local authority officers

have also supported the school's work to develop writing, spelling and mathematics. The impact of this work is starting to be reflected in the outcomes achieved by pupils.

The LLE has provided valuable support to the school in developing the approach to assessment and by facilitating training sessions for the governing body. Teachers have benefited from the opportunity to visit the LLE's school to observe effective teaching and to work with other teachers to moderate assessment judgements.