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2 July 2019

Mrs Shabana Amir-Baz
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Amir-Baz

Special measures monitoring inspection of Banners Gate Primary School

Following my visit with Anna Smith, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 June 2019, 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 June 2018.

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 has had permission to appoint three newly qualified teachers (NQTs) for September. It is recommended that no more new appointments of NQTs should be made before the next 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 Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Heather Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - effective leadership is secured and sustained at all levels to improve teaching, learning and assessment, so that all groups of pupils across the school make at least good progress
 - checks made on teaching focus sharply on the progress of pupils with different abilities
 - assessment information is accurate and is used to support teachers in identifying appropriate next steps for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics
 - provision for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective across all year groups
 - communication with parents and staff is improved to regain their confidence
 - governors rigorously hold leaders to account for spending additional funding, so that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities improve in all year groups
 - attendance improves further so that it is at least in line with the national average, including for those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - behaviour incidents are analysed to detect patterns and trends and action is taken to reduce these.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and thereby raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers use their knowledge of pupils' different abilities to plan suitably challenging activities that enable them to make good progress
 - support provided for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is tailored appropriately to their needs
 - teachers promote and monitor pupils' reading habits and provide suitable books to allow early readers to develop their phonic skills
 - teachers address weaknesses in pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar in order to improve the quality of pupils' writing
 - reasoning and problem-solving skills are further developed to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in mathematics
 - teachers provide tasks which interest and engage pupils so that incidents of low-level disruption or unfocused behaviour become rare.

■ Improve the early years by:

- making sure that the information gathered about the progress children make from their varying starting points is accurate
- a greater range of evidence being collected throughout the year to support teachers' assessments in all aspects of the curriculum
- ensuring that adults in Reception classes move children on in phonics when they have mastered the sounds and letters taught.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to ascertain how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18 to 19 June 2019

Evidence

Inspectors assessed the impact of leaders' actions taken since the last inspection, with a particular focus on the areas for improvement relating to leadership and management, teaching, learning and assessment and early years.

Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the new executive headteacher, who will be in post from September, and other leaders and staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the interim executive board of governors (IEB) and the chief executive officer of the trust that will be seeing the school through its conversion into an academy. She also had a meeting with Birmingham Education Partnership's school improvement priority partner.

The opinions of parents and carers were considered by talking to parents at the school gate before school.

Inspectors observed behaviour during social and in lesson times. Formal and informal discussions took place between inspectors and pupils. Inspectors made short visits, with senior leaders, to a range of lessons across the school. During these visits, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils to evaluate the quality of their learning. Inspectors also examined pupils' work in a sample of their books.

Various school documents were scrutinised, including the local authority's statement of action, the school's action plan and self-evaluation, and minutes of meetings of the IEB. Information about safeguarding and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance were also analysed.

Context

Since the last inspection, there has been considerably high mobility of staff, with 58 staff leaving the school since September 2018. The headteacher that was in post at the last inspection was one of the staff who left. High staff turnover and uncertainty surrounding leadership and governance meant the school did not have the capacity to make the improvements needed during the autumn term 2018. The local authority appointed an IEB from January 2019. An interim headteacher from the Prince Albert Community Trust (PACT) was appointed in February 2019 to lead the school. From September, a permanent executive headteacher from the trust and a permanent head of school will be taking up posts at Banners Gate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Senior leadership has been strengthened since the time of the last inspection. The

interim headteacher, who was appointed in February 2019, senior leaders from PACT and support from Birmingham Education Partnership have enhanced leadership capacity.

The school's revised and updated statement of action is fit for purpose. Relevant, clear and specific actions are set with an appropriate and logical time frame. 'Impact milestones' detail the evidence that will be seen when key outcomes are achieved. Arrangements for informing parents of the actions and taking account of their views are included.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are using this to inform effective action towards the removal of special measures. The school's action plan details a range of strategies that are addressing the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Leaders are aware that, as these strategies have been implemented fairly recently, they have had limited impact. Leaders are aware of the need to evaluate systematically the actions taken and use this to make further improvements.

The incoming executive headteacher and the current interim headteacher have a thorough understanding of the assessment process and have high expectations about what pupils can and should achieve. There is, however, still much variation in the quality of teaching and leaders are taking steps to address this through monitoring and performance management meetings with staff.

Middle leadership is developing, supported by staff from PACT, and new strategies have been implemented to improve the quality of the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. While these strategies are beginning to have an effect, with evidence seen in books, there is still more work needed to ensure that the majority of learners make good progress.

The school has quite rightly prioritised improving the behaviour of pupils and pupils' attitudes to learning in order to ensure that pupils are able to learn with minimal disruptions. This, however, has meant that work on developing foundation subjects and the wider curriculum has been limited. The curriculum still needs further development to ensure that all pupils are interested and engaged in their learning.

Leaders are using the pupil premium review that took place in September 2018 to improve their practice. Meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils now has a much higher profile in the school and this group of pupils benefit from a range of interventions. Teachers know which pupils in their class qualify for the pupil premium. The most effective teachers adapt their approaches to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. While there have been some improvements in progress, behaviour and attendance and the gap is closing, disadvantaged pupils are still not making fast enough progress to attain as well as or better than other pupils.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is

improving. A special educational needs coordinator from the trust has recently taken over responsibility for coordinating the provision. Support for pupils is being reallocated to ensure that adults have the necessary expertise and confidence to deliver high-quality interventions.

Communication with parents is improving. Parents receive regular updates about how their children are progressing at termly parents' meetings and the school regularly sends out letters and holds meetings to keep parents up to date with developments within school. Parents who spoke to an inspector at the start of the school day still have concerns about the school, particularly with regard to the high turnover of staff.

Arrangements for safeguarding were judged to be effective at the time of the last inspection, and this aspect of the school's work continues to be well managed. Clear procedures are in place for raising concerns, and staff are clear about their responsibilities. There is an embedded safeguarding culture in the school that responds appropriately to concerns as they arise.

The IEB is made up of members with a wide range of experience and skills. Since their appointment in January 2019, the school has moved forwards at a rapid pace. They meet monthly, offering support and challenge and holding leaders to close account for improving the school. They receive information about the school's performance from a range of sources and their meetings focus on the school's priorities.

In autumn 2019 the school is becoming part of PACT, when it converts to an academy. The trust, although not yet responsible for the school, has already provided effective support and a range of services to the school. The chief executive officer has a clear understanding of the developments needed in order for the school to improve.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

As a result of staff restructuring, support from across the trust, professional development and systematic monitoring, teaching is improving. More of the teaching is now judged to require improvement; however, teaching overall still remains inadequate.

Close examination of pupils' mathematics and English books shows that actions taken by subject leaders are beginning to have a demonstrable impact on improving outcomes in books. While these improvements are relatively recent, they show that the school is well placed to make further improvements to the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes.

Since February, expectations in books have become more consistent and learning objectives are much sharper. Assessment and feedback are following the school's

new policy and, as a result, presentation of work is improving. Occasionally, where pupils are absent, it is not clear whether they have had the opportunity to catch up with work missed.

Relationships between staff and pupils are improving where pupils have a consistent member of staff to teach them. When walking around the school, the lead inspector saw many pupils working well together and focused on the tasks they had been set by their teachers.

Children in the early years were attentive and engaged in their learning. There were positive behaviours between staff and children. Organisation of learning areas needs attention, both inside and outside the classrooms. Some classrooms are cluttered with resources.

The early years leader has a clear understanding of the curriculum and provision. The information about the progress children make from their starting points is now more accurate and local authority moderation confirms this. Learning journeys show that a greater range of evidence is continually collected throughout the year, which supports teachers' judgements. Adults in the Reception classes now move children on in phonics in a more timely way. There is frequent monitoring of pupils' progress and this ensures that targeted interventions are put in place and reviewed to ensure that pupils keep up and catch up with their reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The launch of a new behaviour policy has set higher expectations of pupils' conduct and has led to a marked improvement in pupils' behaviour. Parents, staff and pupils are clear about the expectations for behaviour and this has resulted in a much calmer atmosphere around school.

Pupils say it is a safe school and can articulate how to keep themselves safe with reference to road safety, stranger danger and keeping safe on the internet. Pupils say occasionally there is poor behaviour and bullying but this is being tackled through the behaviour systems the school has recently put in place.

There have been 27 fixed-term exclusions since September 2018. In response to this, staff received training in March 2019 on managing behaviours and building relationships with pupils. Leaders report a reduction in exclusions since this training and the implementation of the new behaviour systems, which readily reward pupils for their good behaviour.

Current attendance remains slightly below the national average; however, the school has effective systems for following up absentees. A number of incentives are in place that reward good attendance. As a result, persistent absence shows a declining trend.

Outcomes for pupils

In 2018, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception was in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in phonics at the end of Year 1 was slightly below national averages.

In 2018 in key stage 1, children achieved below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of key stage 2, 37% of pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school's own internal data shows that current pupils are making better progress towards the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Local authority moderation and pupils' work confirm this.

External support

Leaders have further developed relationships with Birmingham Education Partnership and PACT that provide objective and accurate evaluations of standards in school. The good-quality support provided by these two agencies has ensured that improvements have been made to leadership and management, teaching, learning and assessment and in the early years.