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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



9 November 2018

Mrs Lisa Dadds
Pawlett Primary School
Gaunts Road
Pawlett
Bridgwater
Somerset
TA6 4SB

Dear Mrs Dadds

Special measures monitoring inspection of Pawlett Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Hannon
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently secure the effectiveness of safeguarding in the school by:
 - ensuring that supervision of pupils at lunchtimes is adequate
 - insisting that referrals of safeguarding concerns are timely and that record-keeping meets requirements
 - ensuring that health and safety requirements are secure and fire safety regulations met.
- Urgently improve leadership and management so that they are consistently good by:
 - ensuring that pupils have equal access to teaching by qualified staff
 - equipping leaders to take effective action to eliminate inadequate teaching
 - measuring pupils' progress from their starting points to eradicate any underachievement quickly
 - insisting that teachers' assessment is accurate and that teachers use it to plan work to meet pupils' needs
 - ensuring that governors robustly hold leaders to account for performance across the whole school and that they know the impact that teaching has on pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment urgently by ensuring that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve in reading, writing and mathematics
 - set work that challenges pupils and deepens their understanding so that middle-attaining pupils and the most able pupils make good progress in writing
 - consistently and effectively deploy and manage teaching assistants.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by ensuring that teaching is demanding enough so that persistent, low-level disruption and disrespectful behaviour in lessons are eradicated.
- Swiftly improve provision in the early years by ensuring that:
 - curriculum requirements are met
 - learning environments are fit for purpose
 - assessment is accurate and used to build on children's knowledge and skills so that they make good progress.

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 third monitoring inspection on 19 October 2018

Evidence

During this inspection, the inspector conducted visits to observe pupils' learning, and reviewed the pupils' work, accompanied by the executive headteacher. She looked at documents and met with the executive headteacher, the senior teacher, staff and pupils.

The inspector held discussions with the chair of the governing body and another with the executive principal of The Priory Learning Trust (TPLT). She held a telephone conversation with the trust's primary phase adviser and another with an officer from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous visit, the interim headteacher formally left Pawlett in July. A new senior teacher has been seconded to the school for a two-year period. She took up her role in June 2018. The interim headteacher continues to support the senior teacher in managing and leading the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The executive headteacher has been seconded for a two-year period on a one day per week basis. Both the executive headteacher and the senior teacher have been seconded from St Anne's Church Academy (part of TPLT). The two temporary teachers left the school in July. A permanent teacher has been appointed in key stage 2. The teacher currently on maternity leave has recently resigned. The number of pupils on roll has increase by a fifth. As a result, classes have been reorganised. There are three classes in the morning and two in the afternoons, four days a week. The school remains the responsibility of the local authority, although TPLT continue to play a key role in the strategic direction and leadership of the school. Consultation to become part of TPLT has taken place, but no formal agreement has been made to date.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher set up highly effective systems and processes, which had started to transform the quality of education provided at Pawlett Primary School. An effective handover with the senior teacher, under the careful watch of the executive headteacher, has supported the continuation of this work.

Leaders have strengthened the systems to check pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders communicate high expectations of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers' assessment is accurate. Although systems are in place, there is a greater need to fine-tune the teaching to compensate for pupils' previous underachievement. The executive headteacher is unable to provide the support that the relatively inexperienced staff need in the current arrangement of one day per week. This is slowing down the rapid pace of improvement made last term. In

addition, the lack of an experienced leader for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities hampers the identification of need and the subsequent progress that these pupils make.

The review of governance has taken place. Governors have responded quickly to the very few recommendations. The expertise on the governing body has been strengthened with an additional governor, who has a focus on assessment data. Governors continue to keep a careful watch on the implementation of the school's action plan. A governor responsible for safeguarding makes regular checks to ensure that the school's records, including fire and health and safety, are compliant with the latest government guidelines. Further work has been carried out to increase the school's site security.

Parents continue to praise the school's leadership and are delighted with the improvements in the school's communication. Parents were particularly pleased with the recent parents' meetings where they discussed their child's progress.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

As a result of a concerted focus from school leaders, and the commitment and determination of current teaching staff, the quality of teaching is improving across the school. Pupils' work reflects an improvement in standards, underpinned by an emphasis on higher expectations. However, sometimes teaching is too ambitious and does not consider the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. When this occurs, pupils do not grasp the most important aspects of lessons clearly enough.

Teachers work hard to provide imaginative and engaging texts to enhance pupils' vocabulary so that they write well. As a result, pupils are inspired to write and make good word choices to engage the reader. However, there is more to do to develop pupils' skills in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In addition, many of the children in key stage 1 have poor pencil grip, which hampers their handwriting and the speed at which they write.

Leaders' guidance to teachers about planning and expectations has improved communication between staff and pupils, so that more pupils make better progress than previously. However, although one-to-one support mostly meets pupils' needs, when this is not matched to work set in lessons, pupils' progress slows.

Since my previous visit, teachers have provided better opportunities for pupils to think more deeply about their learning in mathematics. Work in books shows that more pupils are working to the standards expected for their age.

Current teaching in the early years is making effective use of accurate assessment to ensure that children make good progress. Improvements to the learning environment have been sustained.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Leaders have made sure that adults use a consistent approach to rewarding good behaviour and reducing the number of times where behaviour gets in the way of learning. Most pupils try hard and want to do well. However, there are still a few occasions, particularly when work is not well matched to pupils' needs, when pupils lose interest in their learning. They do not overtly disrupt others but do not concentrate well.

There are marked improvements in pupils' attendance. Significantly fewer pupils are persistently absent from school. Parents say that their children are eager to attend school.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of the better teaching, which is evident across the school. Inspection evidence confirms leaders' views that pupils' progress is accelerating, and attainment is beginning to rise across the school. For example, statutory assessment results for 2018 suggest that there have been gains at the end of each key stage. In particular, strong teaching in key stage 2 in the last academic year, led to a similar proportion to the national average reaching the expected standard in reading and mathematics. Pupils' writing remains a weakness. It continues to be marred by inaccuracies in grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Work in pupils' books reflects improved standards in mathematics. Leaders have implemented changes in the curriculum which have led to pupils' increased confidence in applying their knowledge to problem-solving.

External support

TPLT provides highly effective support for the school. Through the regular and accurate reviews of the school's effectiveness, it has a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve further. The trust has stabilised staffing in the school.

The local authority continues to make regular checks on the school's progress and works closely with trust leaders and the governing body to ensure that the school is on track towards the removal of special measures.