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21 May 2015

Mrs Lucy Griffiths  
Headteacher  
South Hetton Primary School  
Frederick Terrace  
South Hetton  
Durham  
DH6 2TJ

Dear Mrs Griffiths

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of South Hetton Primary School**

Following my visit with Anne Humble, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19 and 20 May 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 October 2014. 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

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 and Adults Services for Durham.

Yours sincerely

Belita Scott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014**

- Urgently improve leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
  - improving the effectiveness and the rigour of the checks that the school makes in order to judge its performance, including making more thorough and precise checks on the quality of teaching and learning
  - ensuring that the arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are robust and hold all teachers to account for the progress that their pupils make
  - providing staff with effective support and training to improve and develop their skills
  - ensuring that improvement planning is well-focused with measurable targets for improvement and tight timescales
  - increasing the rigour with which the school collects and analyses information about pupils' progress including the progress made by different groups of pupils
  - making certain that governors are provided with up-to-date and accurate information about the progress and achievement of pupils
  - ensuring that middle leaders have the skills and the opportunities to play a full and active part to support leadership in the drive to improve school performance
  - providing governors with bespoke training to give them the necessary skills and confidence so that they are able to hold the school to account for pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.
  
- Eradicate all inadequate teaching and make sure all is at least good in order to significantly raise pupils' achievement and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 1, by:
  - urgently raising teachers' expectations of what pupils of all abilities, including the most able can do and achieve
  - ensuring that assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress is accurate and used to match activities to the abilities and needs of pupils including the most able
  - making sure that pupils have an enthusiasm for learning by setting work that captures their interests and engages them in their learning
  - ensuring that all staff check pupils' progress during lessons so that they are able to adapt tasks and eliminate any misconceptions
  - sharing the existing good practice to improve weaker teaching
  - making certain that teachers' marking provides written, well-defined steps for improvement and pupils correct their mistakes
  - ensuring that all staff have the same high expectations of the accuracy with which pupils' work is set out, especially in mathematics

- making sure that there is a constant focus on the progress of disadvantaged pupils to remove any attainment gaps between them and their peers in all subjects.
- Improve the quality of provision in the early years so that all children, regardless of their starting points, achieve at least well and start Year 1 with the essential skills that they need by:
  - improving the quality of the assessment of children's development in each area of learning, especially in their speech and language, so that children's progress is accurately judged and making certain that the resulting information is used to plan activities that move children's learning on
  - making sure that children have interesting opportunities to explore, investigate for themselves and solve problems, both in and outdoors so they are able to become inquisitive and think for themselves
  - ensuring that staff actively support children's learning by continually prompting and checking their thinking
  - making certain that leaders and managers rigorously check whether or not the actions they have taken are having the required impact on accelerating progress and raising achievement.

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

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.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 19 to 20 May 2015.**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two groups of pupils. The inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority, a representative from the Tudhoe Learning Trust and spoke informally with parents at the beginning of the school day. The inspectors, accompanied by senior leaders, looked at pupils' work and observed teaching.

### **Context**

There have been a number of changes since the last monitoring inspection. A substantive deputy headteacher has taken up post. The teacher in the Reception class is now teaching in Year 2 and the Year 2 teacher is now teaching in the Reception class. Middle leaders now lead the early years, Key Stage 1, lower Key Stage 2 and upper Key Stage 2 phases. One new parent governor has joined the governing body. An academy order has been passed for the school to join Tudhoe Learning Trust. The school's plans to become an academy are progressing well.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Rates of progress made by pupils overall are improving in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the rate of improvement is inconsistent between different classes in Key Stage 2 with Year 4 being particularly slow in all three areas. The attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are narrowing in the majority of year groups in school but, again, this is inconsistent. Gaps remain wide in Year 4 and Year 1. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making better progress in reading than they are in writing and mathematics. Progress made by the most able pupils remains inconsistent because work is not always challenging enough. Nevertheless, pupils' progress in lessons is beginning to hasten. Teachers are now adapting their planning quickly in response to individual pupils' work. Leaders have established afternoon clinics to address difficulties experienced by pupils in morning lessons. Teachers check on pupils' progress within lessons much more regularly. Pupils are beginning to self-assess their work effectively.

Children in the early years are now making better progress but they are not catching up quickly enough in all areas and progress in writing is slow. The school's own checks indicate that too many children are still below the level of development that is typical for their age. The attainment gaps between disadvantaged children and their peers are narrowing marginally in the Reception class. The indoor and outdoor learning environments are much improved as a result of advice and support from the local authority.

Pupils have noticed many improvements since the inspection in October. They say that displays are changed more regularly and help their learning. They say they learn more because their work is much more focused and teachers help them more in lessons. Pupils really appreciate the opportunity to develop new skills, such as self-assessment.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving because the school has established actions that all teachers are required to carry out – their 'non-negotiables'. Teachers have responded positively and have taken advantage of all training available through the local authority and links with Tudhoe Learning Trust. As a result, in the vast majority of classes, teachers have higher expectations of the capabilities of the pupils they teach and are deploying teaching assistants more effectively. Teachers now use their knowledge of pupils' current abilities (gained through pre-assessments) and effective checking in lessons to plan next steps in learning for individuals and groups. This is leading to better rates of progress. However, work provided for the most able pupils is still not always challenging enough. Systems to address weaknesses in pupils' understanding of new learning have been established. Teachers respond to pupils more regularly during lessons and identify pupils who need additional help to understand new concepts. This help is quickly provided during afternoon clinics.

Pupils' presentation in workbooks is improving in most year groups because teachers' expectations are now more explicit following the introduction of presentation contracts in English and mathematics. Standards in handwriting remain a concern throughout the school. Teachers' marking of pupils' work has improved. However, progress is slow in writing because errors in basic skills are sometimes uncorrected. For example, in a Key Stage 2 workbook, upper and lower case letter 's' has been used incorrectly since the beginning of the academic year and has not been challenged.

Teaching in the early years is improving because teachers and teaching assistants interact with children more frequently to check on their learning and to model good speaking and listening skills. Although a great deal of time and effort has been spent on improving both the indoor and outdoor environments, there are still not enough opportunities for children to carry out number work and investigations. Teachers and teaching assistants now provide many opportunities for children to mark-make and write in Nursery and Reception but the children do not choose to access them regularly. As a result, progress in writing remains slow.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They are polite and respectful to their peers and to adults. There are occasional incidences of poor behaviour when pupils are lined up at the end of break times for too long. Lessons start late after

break times and vital learning time is lost. Pupils are eager to learn and behave well in lessons. There are still occasional examples of low-level disruption and silliness. These occur when the work teachers set is not sufficiently challenging for pupils and they do not have to think deeply to succeed.

Pupils have noticed that teachers' expectations of behaviour are now more consistent across the whole school and that teachers are more patient. The school's new 'chill out' room is used effectively to calm pupils with more challenging behaviours. The school's logs show a significant reduction in behavioural incidents since the start of the spring term and a corresponding reduction in exclusions.

Pupils behave well in the early years but they lack the confidence to explore fully the learning opportunities that are provided. They are not yet willing to 'have a go'; this is most noticeable in mark making and writing.

Pupils' attendance remains broadly average. Persistent absences are reducing because of the proactive work of the school with parents. Pupils arrive punctually for school. They are knowledgeable about the different forms that bullying can take and know what to do if they see any bullying. Pupils are adamant that bullying is not an issue at South Hetton Primary School. Pupils understand the importance of respect, the rule of law and democracy in Britain today.

Two trip hazards (one of which had already been identified by the school), seen by inspectors during the first day of the inspection, were dealt with promptly by support staff. Pupils feel very safe and secure in school and trust their teachers implicitly. This trust has supported recent improvements in their learning. Pupils appreciate the efforts that their teachers are making for them.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The headteacher has not fully accepted the outcomes of the previous inspection. Consequently, self-evaluation remains an area of weakness. The school's self-evaluation document has not been updated since the inspection in October. The school's post-Ofsted action plan was judged not fit for purpose in January. This plan was then supplemented by a milestones document. The milestones document, although annotated by the headteacher, has not been updated to show which milestones have been achieved, are on track or have not been achieved. Governors do not have a clear understanding of the milestones document. Therefore, the school's action planning remains not fit for purpose.

New initiatives have been implemented and show some early signs of improving pupils' achievements overall. However, senior leaders have not measured the impact of these initiatives in detail. They cannot explain which initiatives have had a very positive impact and which have not. Consequently, leadership remains a weakness.

Nevertheless, the headteacher and other leaders have willingly accepted guidance and support from the local authority and from Tudhoe Learning Trust. Teachers are determined to improve achievement across the school. They value the training that they have attended and recognise that their teaching is leading to improvements in pupil progress. Morale among teaching staff is, therefore, high.

Senior leadership in the school has been strengthened by the appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher. Middle leaders' roles and responsibilities have been reorganised to create four phase leader posts. However, it is too soon to evaluate fully the impact of these changes.

The school's assessments have been moderated externally by local authority staff and are accurate. Key Stage 2 phase leaders make effective use of half termly data harvests to analyse the attainment and progress of cohorts of pupils and groups of pupils. Other phase leaders have not yet had the opportunity to carry out this important task. The school's procedures for tracking the attainment and progress of children in the early years, especially in the Nursery class, are not strong. Leaders must develop a South Hetton way to measure the attainment and progress of children in nursery from their different starting points and times.

Performance management arrangements are now more rigorous and are linked to ambitious pupil progress targets. Continuing professional development has a much higher priority in school. As a result, teachers and teaching assistants have accessed a wide variety of internal and external training. This includes visits to schools in the Tudhoe Learning Trust and to good and outstanding schools within the local authority.

A comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the pupil premium (additional government money) was undertaken by the Durham Teaching School Alliance in February 2015. Senior leaders have not addressed these recommendations with sufficient urgency.

Governors are better informed about the work of the school. The content of the headteacher's reports to governors is much improved. Governors are now more effective in holding school leaders to account because their skills are improving following training attended. The review of their effectiveness is complete and a comprehensive action plan has been developed. Not all actions have been undertaken but a promising start has been made. Governors have visited outstanding schools, have carried out a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks with the local authority and have monitored the provision in classrooms with the local authority. They challenge the work of senior leaders at regular meetings of the school scrutiny group.

The school is working cooperatively with Tudhoe Learning Trust in preparation for transition to the trust on 1 July 2015.

## **External support**

The local authority has provided a wide range of effective support to the school. This includes: a scrutiny of mathematics and English workbooks in all year groups carried out with staff; a moderation of the accuracy of assessments in writing; advice on the organisation of the early years environments; and planning for progress in the early years. As a result, middle leaders are developing their leadership skills and are playing a much bigger role in school improvement. Opportunities for the governors, senior leaders and teachers to work with the schools in the Tudhoe Learning Trust are developing their skills even further.