

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



3 March 2016

Mrs Janet Walls  
Acting Headteacher  
Somercotes Infant and Nursery School  
Nottingham Road  
Somercotes  
Alfreton  
DE55 4LY

Dear Mrs Walls

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Somercotes Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 February 2016, 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 2015. 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 not 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 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 Derbyshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2015**

- Improve teaching and pupils' involvement in their learning by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations for pupils' progress
  - teachers use questioning well to check and to extend the learning of all groups of pupils
  - teachers set activities for children in the early years that stimulate their imagination and guide their learning
  - additional adults do not overly direct the work of the pupils they support in lessons
  - teachers help pupils to take greater care over the work in their books.
  
- Raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that teachers:
  - implement policies for teaching early reading
  - develop useful links with parents to enable them to contribute more fully to improving their children's reading skills
  - model good writing skills effectively
  - provide good opportunities for pupils to write at length
  - provide pupils with clear feedback which helps them to improve their writing
  - provide pupils with good opportunities to use and to apply their mathematical skills.
  
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - policies and procedures for pupils' safety are urgently reviewed and that robust systems are implemented quickly so that all safeguarding requirements are fully met
  - rigorous systems for coordinating the school's work are quickly established which enable all leaders to contribute effectively to driving improvement
  - rigorous systems for managing staff performance are established and used effectively to identify training needs, and to improve teaching, leadership skills and the quality of self-evaluation

- disadvantaged pupils receive the good teaching and support they need to make good progress
- systems for managing pupils' behaviour in the dinner hall are effective
- governors rapidly improve their capacity to hold leaders firmly to account
- the school's website is established and contains all the required information for parents.

An external review of governance, including the 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 first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 February 2016**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the Chair and of the Governing Body and its vice-chair, a group of pupils and two representatives of the local authority. I spoke with several parents at the beginning of the school day. I observed teaching in all classes and looked at work in pupils' books. I considered documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching and reviewed your most recent information on pupils' progress and attainment. I also scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

The headteacher has been on long-term sickness absence since June 2015. An acting headteacher has been in post since July 2015. An established teacher is currently undertaking an acting deputy headteacher role. The acting assistant headteacher was absent from school during the monitoring visit. There has been significant absenteeism among staff since the previous inspection and the school has appointed supply teachers to cover these classes. There have been several changes to the governing body, including a new Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair, who both took up post in January 2016. A school business manager was appointed in July 2015. Some parts of the school building have recently been condemned by the local authority. As a result, significant building work is taking place. Both Reception classes are working in temporary accommodation with no outdoor provision. Plans are in place for the school to convert to an academy later this year.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The most recent national assessments in 2015, which have yet to be validated, show that standards at the end of Year 2 declined significantly to reach an all-time low. The progress of boys is significantly worse than that of girls. Disadvantaged pupils make inadequate progress and there are significant gaps between their attainment and that of their peers and of other pupils nationally. An extremely small number of pupils achieved the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics. The work in pupils' workbooks confirms that attainment for too many remains well below age-related expectations because teaching over time has not been ambitious enough and there is a severe legacy of underachievement.

The school has begun to put procedures in place to tackle underachievement. A new, reliable system for assessing pupils' progress has been set up and a firm baseline has been established for the school to measure progress against. This assessment information and pupils' workbooks show that the progress made by pupils varies widely depending on which class they are in.

However, there are some very early signs that outcomes are beginning to improve. For example, the impact of improvements to the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) is evident. In lessons, pupils demonstrate that they are using their phonics skills more confidently to read and tackle unfamiliar words. The school's most recent information on pupils' progress and attainment shows that pupils are making better progress in reading; in a few classes they are working closer to age-related expectations. There is a small amount of progress that is consistently good in one Year 1 class. Nonetheless, senior leaders know that teaching is not consistent enough to sustain improvements to pupils' progress over time in all classes.

Only 52% of children reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year in 2015. This represents inadequate progress for too many pupils, particularly for boys, whose progress is significantly below that of girls and is a cause for concern. Children in the early years provision are not learning enough or developing the necessary skills to prepare them for the next stage of their education. Year 1 and Year 2 teachers are left with too much to do to help them catch up.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Local authority consultants are working with all staff to improve the planning and delivery of lessons. All members of staff have received training in phonics, and this is now being taught more systematically in the early years provision, as well as in Key Stage 1. The acting headteacher has made significant improvements to the quality of the learning environment through tidying clutter, throwing out old resources, creating inspiring book areas in all classes and investing in new, high-quality resources. As a result, the learning environment is generally clean, tidy and more child-friendly. However, the learning deficiencies are deep rooted and, despite these initial successes, there is significant work still to do.

Too many teachers do not have high enough expectations of what constitutes good teaching and learning. Staffing instability, caused by staff absence, has hindered leaders' efforts to gain consistency in the quality of teaching. Currently, learning observed in lessons and the quality of work seen in books show that too many pupils underachieve over time and teaching has not improved sufficiently since the section 5 inspection in June 2015.

Teachers are not using assessment information about pupils' learning well enough to plan tasks that build on what pupils already know and understand. Teachers do not set work at the correct level for all pupils. Some tasks are too difficult, while others lack challenge, especially for the most able. Pupils' workbooks show a lack of high expectation from too many teachers. In all lessons, teachers are supported by other adults. However, it is often unclear what their role or impact on learning is.

The quality of teaching and learning in the early years provision has declined since the section 5 inspection in June 2015. The school's records of children's learning do not clearly show what children know, understand or can do. Consequently, teachers do not plan the children's next steps in learning well enough. During this inspection, there were frequent incidents of low-level disruption, as well as children flitting from one activity to another with no clear focus or purpose to their learning. In the Nursery, the learning environment is uninspiring and resources are not well organised or easily accessible for children. The outdoor provision is not being used effectively and many resources are tatty and dirty. The current mitigating circumstances which prevent children in the Reception Year from accessing any outdoor learning are limiting children's physical development, as well as their progress in all areas of learning. The school and local authority are addressing this as a matter of urgency.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Behaviour around the school is generally good. However, pupils do not have positive attitudes to learning in all lessons. When teaching is weak and does not engage pupils well, they become inattentive and restless. Teaching assistants are not always successful in refocusing inattentive pupils on their learning. As a result, the quality of pupils' work remains variable. Handwriting is untidy and sometimes poorly formed. Pupils are not set high enough expectations for their work and teachers do not consistently show pupils good handwriting and presentation when teaching or marking pupils' work.

Pupils' behaviour at lunchtime in the dining hall has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils enjoy the new self-service arrangements. They queue sensibly and show respect to the kitchen staff, saying 'please' and 'thank you' as they are served. They show respect for midday supervisors and generally respond quickly to instructions.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

Since joining the school in July 2015, the acting headteacher has had a clear impact on improving the school, most notably in terms of keeping pupils safe. A thorough review of the school's safeguarding, child protection and other related policies has taken place. All policies now meet statutory requirements. The school business manager is keeping a meticulous check on these documents and ensuring that they are updated immediately to reflect any changes. Pupils confirm that they are happy and feel safe. Parents welcome the vastly improved security arrangements around the school site and have no concerns about the safety of their children.

All teachers are being held more accountable for the progress made by pupils in their classes. Regular meetings have been introduced to discuss pupils' progress. These are ensuring that teachers identify which pupils need additional support and this is then being provided on an individual basis or in a small group. The targets set for teachers' performance have also been reviewed and are suitably challenging.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose. It is reviewed each half term and rated against a traffic-light scheme to determine which actions have been completed, which are on track to be achieved and which are not on track to be achieved. However, it would be useful for the plan to identify more clearly who is responsible for monitoring each action and the methods of monitoring being used. This would help governors to hold all senior leaders more rigorously to account.

The information on the school website does not yet meet the requirements set out by the government. A new website is in the final stages of construction and will ensure that parents have access to the correct information.

The strong leadership of the acting headteacher is driving forward many improvements. However, the impact of leadership and management is limited because not all senior leaders demonstrate that they have the necessary capacity to influence or drive the improvements that are urgently required, particularly in the early years provision.

The recently appointed Chair of the Governing Body is highly experienced and is providing a strong lead. He is well supported by the new vice-chair and together they have a good strategic vision for the school. Following an external review of governance, all governors are working hard to improve their understanding of their roles and responsibilities and there are signs that they are becoming increasingly effective in holding senior leaders to account. The review of the management of the pupil premium has only recently taken place and the report is not yet available.

### **External support**

The school is receiving extensive support from the local authority. Visits from a range of local authority colleagues are being well coordinated by the link adviser. Teaching and learning consultants are providing a range of training for all staff, as well as one-to-one support. In addition, the local authority has brokered support from another local school and effective partnership work has been established. The link adviser and senior adviser have acted quickly this week to address concerns about the absence of the acting assistant headteacher. As a result, another part-time senior leader will be joining the school next week to provide additional leadership capacity. At the present time, the school is very heavily dependent on external support in almost all aspects of its work.