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Ms Julie Griffiths
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Ms Griffiths

Special measures monitoring inspection of Seva School

Following my visit with Nigel Griffiths, Ofsted Inspector to your school on 3 and 4 July 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in September 2016. 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.

I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2016.

- Urgently improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - resolving the misunderstanding, misplaced priorities and lack of trust that exist between leaders, governors and staff
 - improving communication and cooperation across the school community
 - agreeing upon a permanent leadership structure
 - ensuring that roles and responsibilities of governors, leaders and staff are clearly understood and that no one exceeds their authority or neglects their duties
 - making sure that systems for managing staff performance are sufficiently rigorous and applied with fairness and consistency
 - ensuring that the requirement to publish information about how the school meets its public sector equality duty is published on the school's website.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- Make sure that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met in order to ensure pupils' safety and welfare across the whole school by:
 - urgently carrying out all the required checks on staff
 - making sure that pupils' school records, including admissions, medical information, academic performance and home contact details, are kept up to date and accessible to the right people at the right time
 - making sure that all staff understand their duty of care to safeguard pupils and do not obstruct this vital aspect of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum so that all groups of pupils, especially the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make the best possible progress, by:
 - implementing consistent, reliable and effective assessment procedures in all year groups, including the early years
 - making sure that staff have access to regular training and feedback about the quality of their work.

Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 3 to 4 July 2018

Evidence

We observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. We met with you, the executive headteacher, the external school improvement consultant, other consultants and leaders, members of staff and four members of the board of trustees (governors), including the chair. We also met two groups of pupils. We took account of 10 responses to Parent View. We conducted joint lesson observations with the newly appointed assistant principals. We checked the school's arrangements for safeguarding and policy documents from the website. We scrutinised the school's assessment information, the development plan and other policies and documents.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in February 2018, the headteacher – appointed by trustees as substantive headteacher in January 2018 – has left, as has the deputy headteacher, who had been appointed in September 2016 by previous trustees. The headteacher of Khalsa Primary in Slough, who is a trustee of the school, became acting executive headteacher, supported by three senior leaders from his school. The trustees appointed an external consultant as acting headteacher from April 2018 for four days a week for one term, supported by an external school improvement consultant for two days a week as acting deputy headteacher. The trustees have not made permanent appointments or advertised for the posts of headteacher or deputy headteacher for September 2018. At the time of this monitoring visit, trustees were unable to say with certainty who would be in post at the start of the next term. Trustees said that they have been prevented from making a permanent appointment as a result of ongoing discussions with the Department for Education and a potential sponsor about the future of the school.

External consultants have been appointed for the summer term to support the school's work in early years and in providing for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Permanent appointments have been made for September. Three assistant principals have been appointed permanently in the secondary phase and one in the primary phase during the summer term. A new head of science will also take up his post in September 2018. A number of teachers are leaving at the end of the summer term. New appointments for the autumn term have been made, although there remains a vacancy in modern foreign languages in the secondary phase.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

In the very short time that you and your external school improvement colleague have been in post, you have quickly re-established the trust, confidence and

communication with trustees that had broken down at the time of the last monitoring visit.

Leaders and trustees have been prevented from making the long-term decisions necessary to secure a permanent senior leadership team and reduce dependence on external support. The recently appointed assistant principals have been in place for too short a time to demonstrate their impact, and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the early years coordinator are not due to take up their posts until next term. As a result, the school remains over-reliant on external support.

In a short time, you have sought to make improvements in teaching and learning in the primary phase. You have provided support and challenge to teachers, which have led to either improvements or to staff changes that will take effect in September. Support and challenge to additional adults are less well developed. There is no shared understanding among the leaders I spoke to during the visit of who is responsible for their line management.

The website still does not meet requirements for what information free schools and academies must publish. Certain policies, such as the complaints policy, have only very recently been put in place. Gaps remain concerning information about the pupil premium and equalities objectives.

Trustees took swift action to address weak leadership after the last monitoring visit. However, there has been no communication between the school's named SENCo and governors since the last monitoring visit over four months ago.

Leaders and governors have continued to ensure that the strong culture of safeguarding, secured shortly after the school was first inspected, has been maintained. Governors carry out their role diligently to make sure that leaders have conducted all necessary checks on staff. They ensure that leaders have met all their statutory responsibilities in the way information is recorded and that policies and guidance are up to date. Staff are clear about their responsibilities. They know whom to speak to and what to do should a safeguarding incident arise.

The pupils that I spoke to feel safe in school and said that staff prepare them well for keeping safe at home and outside of school. They said there had been bullying and fighting but the situation was much better now. Pupils know not to provide personal information to a stranger on social media. They continue to be concerned that the site is overcrowded and that the temporary classrooms restrict their space in the playground at breaktimes. However, the school is planning more temporary classrooms next term to cater for the rising number of pupils as the school expands to include a Year 10 for the first time, and the first cohort of Year 6 pupils move into Year 7. A small number of parents and carers responded to Parent View, of whom all agreed that their children felt safe and were happy in school.

You have taken urgent action to overhaul the school's assessment system, which you recognised had been unreliable. Despite these changes and attempts to secure more accurate baseline information, there are gaps in assessment information in a number of subjects in key stage 3 (Years 7 and 8), including science, geography, design and technology, physical education, music, art and, in Year 7 only, religious education (RE). As a consequence, leaders and governors do not have a clear enough view of how well pupils are doing in each subject taught.

Assessment information is now available in Years 1 to 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. There is a strong correlation between the year groups where the leaders identify a lack of progress and the quality of teaching in those year groups. Assessment systems have been overhauled in the early years through the work of the external consultant. They are now more rigorous and reliable.

Those with responsibility for leadership of SEN and/or disabilities were unaware of the assessment information concerning pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They could not tell us how well these pupils were doing or what the impact of additional support and provision had been. Despite leaders' actions, there has been very limited progress in improving the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities where there is overdependence on external support. New leadership will not be in place until next term. As a result, outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities remain low. There have been improvements in the provision for early years, where outcomes, although low, are improving. There has also been dependence on external support in early years.

Little has been done for disadvantaged pupils. Plans are in place for a pupil premium strategy in September 2018 but nothing has been done during this academic year. Both leaders and governors have been slow to address this. As a result, disadvantaged pupils, predominantly in the primary phase, have not made enough progress.

Leaders have taken a strategic decision to end the three-year key stage 4 and extend key stage 3 into Year 9 again. They recognise that pupils currently in Year 8 are not yet ready for the demands of key stage 4 and have not experienced a sufficiently broad and balanced curriculum in key stage 3. Leaders are concerned about the number of pupils leaving, especially in Year 9, where some parents have expressed concerns following the outcome of the previous monitoring visit.

Despite the gains pupils were making in extending their vocabulary and wider curriculum knowledge in key stage 1, older pupils complained that their curriculum had narrowed to English and mathematics in preparation for the tests and assessments at the end of key stage 2.

Overall, leaders have energy and commitment but there remains a lack of strategic oversight. As a result, a number of areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2016 have still not been addressed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

There have been improvements in teaching in the primary phase since the last monitoring visit. Conversely, the quality of teaching in the secondary phase is now more variable than before.

In key stage 1, for example, teaching is exposing pupils to a wide scientific vocabulary of names with Greek and Latin origins through the study of dinosaurs. Meanwhile, pupils preparing a travel brochure for Coventry have extended their geographical vocabulary.

In key stage 2, the extent to which teachers stretch and challenge most-able pupils is variable. Leaders and governors recognise that the work set for lower-attaining pupils is not yet consistently appropriate or challenging. The work we saw in these pupils' books indicates that tasks are unfinished or not attempted because the pupils found them too difficult. Too often, the teacher's response is 'well tried' or 'at least you had a go', rather than setting work at an appropriate level.

Until recently, teachers had been using a number of different assessment systems whose outcomes had not been reliable. This has made it difficult for them to demonstrate the progress that pupils are making. The extent to which teachers take account of the school targets is variable. Teachers do not comply consistently with the school's marking and feedback policy. As a consequence, pupils do not know how they can improve their work from the feedback they receive.

In the secondary phase, there have been recent improvements in the teaching of science and English, where it is secure. However, there is variability in the quality of teaching of mathematics, history, geography and RE.

In early years, staff settle children well into their environment and children respond enthusiastically to the adults that they are working with. There is inconsistency in the way adults enable children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, especially in the outdoors environment, where there are not enough resources to support children.

The extent to which teachers deploy additional adults in primary classes effectively is highly variable. Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and others who need to catch up is largely dependent on the additional 'continuous provision' of literacy and numeracy taught by additional adults in the afternoon. Given the low outcomes for these groups of pupils, and some confusion over who monitors the impact of additional adults, leaders were not able to say confidently what the overall impact of 'continuous provision' has been.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils work hard and apply themselves diligently to their tasks. Where pupils are not as engaged in their work, this is linked to the quality of teaching.

Those pupils we spoke to said that they feel safe in school. Pupils are happy and confident. They reported that they had lots of friends. Those pupils from a non-Sikh background are fully integrated in the life of the school and said they were not made to feel different or left out. During the monitoring visit, pupils had won a trophy in a local debating competition between Coventry schools.

Pupils reported that, previously, there had been a number of fights and that behaviour in classes had not always been good. It is much better now, they said, apart from a small number of 'silly' boys. The behaviour log that we saw indicates that, over time, there had been a high number of incidents, broken down by leaders into the type of incident. There were very few racist incidents and none that were homophobic. Further analysis of incidents by leaders is limited however. Repeat offenders were not identified. It was not clear where and when incidents happened and whether any specific pupil groups were disproportionately represented as perpetrators or victims. During lesson observations and work scrutinies, we saw examples of graffiti and offensive language in planners and exercise books which had not been challenged by teachers.

A high number of pupils have been taken off roll this academic year. The school is also set to lose a number of pupils at the end of Year 9 as parents seek alternative key stage 4 provision. Attendance has continued to decline and the current overall rate is below the national average. However, the rate of attendance is rising and is above the national average in the secondary phase, and, for persistent absence, the rate is in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Assessment information provided by the school indicates that pupils at the end of key stage 2 are working at standards in line with those seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 have made similar progress in writing from the end of key stage 1 compared to national rates of progress for all pupils in 2017. Teachers checked their judgements with those made by teachers in other schools and, for writing, with the local authority. However, pupils have not made enough progress from their starting points at the end of key stage 1 in reading and mathematics.

Disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities have not made enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 to 6 overall, based on the school's own assessment information and its expectation of six steps of progress during the year. Only half of the pupils in each group achieved the school's expectations in reading.

In early years, outcomes in 2018 for children currently in Reception, based on the early learning goals including literacy and numeracy, are below average when compared to the nationally published outcomes in 2017. The school has greater confidence in the results this year, following effective external support. The exceptionally low outcomes recorded the previous year were inaccurate.

Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have not made enough progress. A cap was set on their targets in the first two terms of the year so that they have not fulfilled their potential. Assessment information in the subjects in the secondary phase where data is available shows consistently that most-able pupils have not made enough progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

External support

The school is heavily dependent on external support for senior leadership, early years and provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. The external support this term is different to that which was in place at the previous monitoring visit. The lack of continuity, combined with the newness of much of the current support, means that it has not yet had sufficient impact.

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- the new leadership of early years and provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is effective and not dependent on external support
- a pupil premium strategy is in place to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- pupils in key stage 3 receive a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes design and technology and performing arts.