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27 September 2019

Ms Suzanne Cooper  
Headteacher  
Brunel Primary and Nursery Academy  
Callington Road  
Saltash  
Cornwall  
PL12 6DX

Dear Ms Cooper

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Brunel Primary and Nursery Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 September 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 that you gave during the inspection and for the time that 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 November 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 trust's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

Having considered all of the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governing body, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive officer of Bridge multi-academy trust, the regional

schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cornwall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Aykin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in November 2018**

- Strengthen leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
  - assessment information is accurate and gives a true picture of pupils' attainment and progress
  - the trust board of the multi-academy trust and the local governing body regularly and systematically hold all leaders, including middle leaders, to account for the speed of improvement, the quality of education and the progress of pupils
  - changes that are agreed to improve teaching are implemented consistently and systematically monitored to ensure that they are having the intended impact on pupils' learning and progress.
- Improve pupils' progress through the development of teaching, learning and assessment in all key stages, including early years, by ensuring that:
  - teachers have high expectations for the progress of all pupils
  - teachers' subject and curriculum knowledge is strengthened
  - teachers use assessment information to plan teaching activities so that pupils fill gaps in their understanding and are challenged to learn and apply new knowledge and skills
  - teachers expect high-quality work and remedy pupils' errors quickly
  - pupils acquire phonics knowledge systematically and develop strong skills in grammar, spelling and presentation
  - pupils use their literacy skills to read high-quality and challenging texts, and when writing across the curriculum
  - pupils develop confidence in basic number skills so that they can apply these to well-designed problem-solving and reasoning activities
  - teaching assistants are effectively deployed and focused on improving the learning and progress of pupils.

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

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 first monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 September 2019**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, executive headteacher, three members of the governing body, curriculum leaders and the chief executive officer of the Bridge multi-academy trust. The inspector spoke with the local authority school improvement officer on the telephone. The inspector met formally with three groups of pupils and spoke to pupils informally when observing the school's work. The inspector listened to two groups of pupils read. The inspector conducted joint lesson observations with the headteacher and executive headteacher and looked at work in pupils' books. The school's action plan was evaluated.

### **Context**

This was the first monitoring visit since the school's section 5 inspection in November 2018. The executive headteacher has been in post since February 2019. She works two days a week at the school. Trust leaders for English and mathematics have provided regular support. Since the inspection, the deputy headteacher post has been replaced by two assistant headteacher posts. An assistant headteacher responsible for disadvantaged pupils has been appointed, alongside an assistant headteacher responsible for pastoral care. In April 2019, the Nursery and Reception classes were combined to form one early years setting. The number of pupils on the school's roll has fallen. There is only one Year 1 class this year. An interim governing body was set up in January 2019. The chair of the academy trust is also the chair of the governing body.

### **The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection**

Leaders are ambitious for the academic and social success of all pupils. The English curriculum has been revised to ensure that pupils make sequential links between the books that they read and their own writing. For example, Year 2 pupils study the language features in the text 'Mrs Armitage and the Big Wave' by Quentin Blake to help them craft their writing about the sea. Pupils now have more opportunities to read high-quality books. Pupils enjoy discussing characters, themes and settings in books. For example, pupils in Year 4 are reading 'The Railway Children' by Edith Nesbit. The curriculum is designed to enable pupils to build upon their prior knowledge and access more complex texts. However, it is too early to judge the impact of this new approach to the curriculum.

Pupils use their phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) knowledge well to help them read. The teaching of early reading has been planned well to help pupils read more fluently. The curriculum also focuses on developing pupils' vocabulary so that they can read more complex texts. However, the teaching of vocabulary is not

yet fully embedded across the curriculum. As a result of teachers' heightened expectations, pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They are attentive and conscientious. Pupils' pride in their learning is evident in the presentation of their work.

The mathematics curriculum has been carefully planned. It focuses on strengthening pupils' knowledge about addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Teachers regularly review pupils' understanding to ensure that they can use these methods well. Pupils use pictures and tools to help them understand complex mathematical problems. However, this approach to the curriculum has not had time to have sustained impact.

English and mathematics leaders check the quality of teaching effectively. They provide additional support where necessary to improve the quality of education at the school.

The early years curriculum helps children to move successfully from Nursery to Reception. The outdoor and indoor areas have been redesigned to enable children to move between well-structured activities. For example, children in Nursery develop their imaginations through playing as captains of a ship. Similarly, Reception children develop a strong understanding of the world. For example, they make cakes in the mud kitchen, manipulate diggers in an imaginary building site and recreate family life in a doll's house. Staff use assessment information about children to plan effective learning. Staff recognise that children's language skills are a barrier to their learning and early reading. However, activities do not fully extend children's language skills.

The trust has created a curriculum for subjects other than English and mathematics. However, this curriculum has not yet been taught to pupils. The current curriculum does not develop pupils' knowledge effectively in subjects such as history and geography. Pupils do not have many opportunities to explore geographic and historical concepts in depth.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

School and trust leaders and governors have worked hard to address the previous inspection findings. The executive headteacher works closely with the headteacher to drive forward improvements. To underpin the areas for improvement outlined in the school's action plan, leaders have set up training for all staff to improve the quality of education. In addition, leaders have introduced a peer-mentoring scheme and enabled staff to observe each other to support improvements to the quality of teaching and assessment. However, senior leaders and governors recognise the need to further embed these improvements.

The trust's statement of action clearly outlines the areas for improvement noted in the November 2018 inspection report. School and trust leaders articulate well their

vision for the success of the school. Staff share leaders' ambitions for the academic and social well-being of all pupils. They feel well supported and are proud to work at the school.

Leaders have prioritised the inclusion of all pupils at the school, including pupils with complex needs. Leaders have established a specially resourced centre to cater for pupils with complex needs. Staff provide expert support that meets pupils' needs. This means that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) enjoy coming to school and learning. In the afternoon, most of these pupils study other subjects with their peers. However, the provision for pupils with SEND who do not attend the resource unit is not consistently effective. Some pupils do not develop independent learning skills.

A review of governance was not conducted after the previous inspection as the composition of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body, has changed. An interim governing body was set up. The interim governing body reviews the school's improvements and asks challenging questions. Governors bring a breadth of expertise to their roles. Governors' minutes show that they increasingly hold leaders to account more effectively.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- School leaders and trust leaders communicate their vision for the success of the school well.
- Leaders have prioritised the development of literacy and numeracy skills so that pupils can access the curriculum more effectively.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Leaders have not introduced the newly designed curriculum to staff and pupils.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils with SEND access the curriculum confidently and successfully.

### **External support**

A consultant led a review of the pupil premium funding. Leaders have acted on his recommendations. Cornwall local authority's school improvement officers conducted two reviews of the quality of education at the school. Leaders used these reports to evaluate their progress against the statement of action plan.