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11 October 2010

Mrs Rachel Lewis
Headteacher
Hindley Surestart Nursery
Mornington Road
Hindley
Wigan
Lancashire WN2 4LG

Dear Mrs Lewis

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hindley Surestart Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 8 October 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted 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's Services for Wigan.

Yours sincerely

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Raise children's attainment and ensure their consistent progress across the areas of learning, by:
 - eliminating unsatisfactory teaching
 - ensuring that the curriculum meets children's learning needs and is responsive to their interests
 - ensuring that staff carry out good quality assessments and that children's progress and achievements are recorded appropriately.

- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by ensuring that staff work together as an effective team with a clear focus on school improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Hindley Surestart Nursery

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 7-8 October 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

There have been several staff changes since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher has increased her teaching commitment. A part-time teacher is absent on long-term sick leave. She has been replaced by a full-time teacher. Three teaching assistants have left the school. One teaching assistant has returned from sick leave and another from secondment. One new teaching assistant has joined the school.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Children start the nursery with a wide range of skills and abilities. The majority are working within age-related levels, though some are well below those expected nationally. The weakest area of development is children's communication, language and literacy skills.

After just four weeks in school, the children are happy and settled in the nursery. They are confident using all the indoor and outdoor areas available to them. Most are happy to talk to adults in the setting. Some children are talking clearly in sentences and are confident to talk to visitors; others have relatively poor language skills. In circle time and story time, children are becoming increasingly aware of the class routines. They are beginning to demonstrate the good listening, good looking and good sitting skills encouraged by the practitioners. Children are responding well to the introduction of 'sign-along'. This is particularly helping those children who experience speech and language delay to understand and carry out instructions from staff.

Most children focus well during their play outdoors. During the visit some made a roller coaster from crates, saying 'all aboard' before they made their imaginary journey. Staff support the children using large climbing apparatus sensitively, enabling them to develop their confidence by offering support where appropriate. However, in other activities, children lost interest quickly. This was mainly where staff leading the activity did not interact well with the children and so the children

did not sustain their initial interest or concentration, frequently leaving the adult alone or with just one child.

Indoors, children are beginning to sustain their concentration on activities well. In particular, using the play-dough, where an adult played alongside the children and developed their language skills well, particularly for those who speak English as an additional language. Staff led the focused activities well. For example, children made good progress in one circle time session. They enjoyed finding the sounds for animals that had 'lost their sounds' and sustained their interest. Where play was less successful, it was because staff failed to pick up on children's interests and did not listen carefully enough to what the children were saying. This resulted in children moving away from activities and not sustaining their concentration for long enough to make satisfactory or better progress.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise children's attainment and ensure consistent progress across the areas of learning – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Children are calm and happy in the nursery. Behaviour is improving. Children enjoy eating the healthy snacks provided and those who stay for a school lunch appreciate the good food. They are active in their play, which is helping them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Children are learning the difference between what is fair and unfair and how to be kind and helpful to one another.

The effectiveness of provision

Staff have worked hard to reorganise the indoor areas of the classroom since the last inspection. They have considered carefully how to develop the indoor and outdoor space for a variety of purposes linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. They have created suitable areas for quiet activities, such as circle time and story time. Each day children now experience a good balance of planned adult-led activities, known as 'focused activities', and supported play, known as 'interactions'. Staff are beginning to link their planned focused activities to children's next steps in learning, following on from their baseline assessments of children's skills and abilities. They are now recording these more systematically and linking them to children's learning journeys and records of achievement. Staff encourage parents and carers to look at notes about their children's progress on the busy board. However, this is still at a very early stage of development.

During the inspection, most sessions observed were of a satisfactory quality or better. However, a small proportion was inadequate. This was mainly where staff failed to interact well with the children. For example, children did not respond to staff because the conversation was above their level of understanding. Sometimes

staff failed to listen and watch the children carefully enough to pick up on their levels of language and interests. This slowed children's progress in their learning. On other occasions, staff appeared overly tense in their relationships with the children they were working with; this resulted in other children not approaching to join in an activity. Where sessions were good, the children were excited and participated enthusiastically. In particular, the children building a house outdoors, where boys were keen to make notes on clip boards and take imaginary measurements. Other good sessions included children dressing-up and enacting a well-known story and making birthday cakes with play-dough and blowing out candles.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- eliminating unsatisfactory teaching – inadequate
- ensuring that the curriculum meets children's learning needs and is responsive to their interests – satisfactory
- ensuring that staff carry out good quality assessments and that children's progress and achievements are recorded appropriately – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, supported well by the deputy headteacher and key staff, is driving school improvement at an appropriate pace. Members of the senior leadership team have implemented a robust system for recording children's levels of attainment and are linking it to measuring children's progress. Staff are now being held accountable for children's progress and are aware of the need to raise their expectations for children's potential. Staff appreciate the clear timeline for the completion of their tasks linked to the raising attainment plan. Staff provided with an intensive support plan report that these are helpful. However, the purpose of the plan is not always stated clearly enough and, as a result, it is not possible for managers to measure the impact of the plan on practice.

Several recent initiatives introduced by the headteacher are leading towards improvements in team work. These include the reorganisation of the nursery into two separate classes, staff planning together, moderating the assessment of pupils' progress and establishing children's good learning habits for circle time and story time. However, some difficulties arranging staff meetings around the contractual arrangements of some staff remain a frustration. Consequently, the progress towards good team work is slowing. Members of the governing body are supporting the school well. However, the minutes of meetings do not state clearly enough the progress made by the school against the plans for improvement, which is limiting governors' ability to hold the school fully to account.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by ensuring that staff work together as an effective team with a clear focus on school improvement – satisfactory

External support

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. The school is receiving good advice and support from the local authority adviser and early years consultants. The governing body and headteacher also appreciate the helpful guidance from the local authority human resources department in resolving staffing difficulties.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure all intensive support plans include clear aims and expected outcomes.