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4 February 2011

Ms Jacqueline Treacy
Executive Headteacher
Wykeham Primary School
Rainsford Way
Hornchurch
Essex
RM12 4BP

Dear Ms Treacy

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wykeham Primary School

Following my visit with Michael Milton, additional inspector, to your school on 2–3 February 2011, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2009. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 Havering.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing, mathematics and science so that it is consistently good throughout the school by:
 - setting suitably challenging targets for the progress expected in each year
 - involving teachers more fully in checking each pupil's progress at regular intervals and taking prompt action to address signs of underachievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - raising teachers' expectations about the rate of learning of which pupils are capable and the quality of their work in lessons
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge and the range of strategies they use to promote good learning and progress
 - ensuring that teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan challenging tasks for all groups of pupils, especially those who are more able.
- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors in driving improvement by:
 - evaluating all aspects of the school's work with greater rigour
 - embedding ambitious expectations among all staff and pupils
 - ensuring that the school improvement plan and subject action plans are clearly focused on raising achievement
 - developing governors' expertise in checking the school's effectiveness and challenging it to improve.

Special measures: monitoring of Wykeham Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 2–3 February 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. Lessons were observed in all classes, involving a total of fourteen teachers. Meetings were held with senior leaders of the school, the Chair of the Governing Body, the teachers and the principal inspector from the local authority. A small number of parents and carers were spoken to as they brought their children into school.

Context

The headteacher is unwell and has been absent from the school since September 2010. On the week of this visit, a second executive headteacher started at the school and she will stay until the end of July 2011, working here for four days each week. The roles and responsibilities of senior staff and subject leaders have been reviewed. There are two new governors and elections for new parent governors have recently taken place. There is a new teacher in Year 1.

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

The work in pupils' books, their learning in lessons and the school's tracking data all suggest that pupils in Years 2 to 6 made satisfactory progress last term in reading, writing and mathematics. This is the general picture across the year groups and, although it is too early to make secure comparisons against their performance at the end of the last academic year, the data suggest that pupils in Years 2 and 5 are making the most rapid progress. Year 1 pupils have just completed a set of assessments from which to monitor their attainment through the National Curriculum as the year progresses. The first set of assessments for science has been completed and tracking systems are now in place to monitor pupils' progress in this subject.

As a result of work completed last term by the assistant headteacher, a clearer picture of pupils' attainments and rates of progress is emerging. This, together with training for teachers on the use of tracking data for pupils in their class, is helping to challenge any areas of underachievement. In addition, the expectation that all pupils will make progress in line with national averages is now firmly embedded in the work of teachers, leaders and members of the governing body. There are still some refinements needed for targets for the most able pupils and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This goes hand-in-hand with current work by the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), which is to identify and challenge these two particular groups of pupils more accurately.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing, mathematics and science so that it is consistently good throughout the school – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour remains generally good. However, pupils do not always arrive promptly for the start of lessons or settle quickly enough between tasks in class. Things have slipped a little too in their care of the school environment. For example, the floor in the dining room is very messy after lunchtime and personal belongings are not always kept tidily in corridors. At playtimes, pupils generally play safely but there are insufficient play resources and activities for some pupils to make the most of the time. The attendance rates for this academic year so far are too low. The school has stopped authorising holidays in term time and continues to work closely with the education welfare officer.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching for learning has improved since the last monitoring visit. Teachers have been steadfast in their determination to improve their teaching. They have taken advice and are positive about the support that they receive. They particularly benefit from opportunities to observe one another and discuss how to develop their practice together. As a result, all teaching and learning seen during this visit, together with that observed by the school and outside professionals since November, are at least satisfactory and increasingly good. The significant thing happening now is that teachers are more effectively combining all of the component parts of a lesson together. There is greater confidence in using tracking data, more effective use of time for pulling learning together at the end of lessons, more opportunities for pupils to respond to questions and improved marking. Consequently, teachers are meeting the needs of different groups of pupils more successfully. Teachers' use of subject-specific vocabulary and opportunities for pupils to use and understand the vocabulary are much improved. There are occasions when insufficient time is given to pupils to respond to questions. This is either because insufficient time is planned for this to happen, or because time for individual pupils' responses is cut short, reducing the opportunity for others in the class to benefit from what is being said or discussed. Teachers' plans are better because they routinely reflect the needs of different groups, including each group getting their fair share of their teacher's time. The use of time by learning support staff is often effective in supporting group tasks but when the teacher is talking to the whole class their time could be used more effectively.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Following the last monitoring visit, leaders and managers were asked to inject a greater sense of urgency so that the pace of change accelerated. This they have done successfully. The deputy headteacher wasted no time in giving higher priority to the provision for the most able pupils. Having investigated the availability of some initial opportunities for this group, some suitable activities have taken place. There are now firm plans in place to look at school policy, provision and identification for the most able pupils. The assistant headteacher immediately undertook a detailed analysis of pupils' results at the end of each key stage and year group. This resulted in establishing a range of support for those pupils identified as underachieving in literacy and mathematics. The first executive headteacher completed the review of senior responsibilities. As a result, suitable arrangements are now in place for the leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage, mathematics, literacy, science and the most able pupils. It is too early for their work to show impact on pupils' provision and progress but each leader has an action plan in place. The senior leadership team has completed a revised action plan that provides sufficiently high priorities for the things that need to change the most.

Now that there is secure leadership of the school for the rest of this academic year, together with improvement in teaching and redistributed leadership responsibilities, it is time for a renewed focus on strategic leadership. This includes the work of the SENCO so that the achievement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is evaluated and promoted more thoroughly. The governing body continues to develop its strategic responsibilities. In tandem with improved information from the senior staff, it is more searching in its questions of the school's work. It no longer requires additional support from the local authority and plays a full part in the evaluation of the school's work. New governors have been appointed and are already injecting additional rigour to the work.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors in driving improvement – satisfactory

External support

The local authority took swift action to establish ongoing leadership of the school in the absence of the headteacher. The availability of suitable interim leaders was problematic in getting continuity and smooth handovers between these appointments and this has led to some uncertainty surrounding the long-term leadership of the school. This uncertainty was expressed to inspectors by staff and parents and carers. Nevertheless, the appointment of an executive headteacher for the next two terms allows for a period of stability.

Support from local authority advisers continues in partnership with what senior leaders perceive as priority areas. The support is welcomed, valued and acted upon positively by staff. It would be helpful to the school if some of the advisers' recommendations and plans focus more explicitly on the progress that pupils are making, or need to make. The school would now welcome more support from advisers to develop their provision and expertise for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

While the school is still reliant on support from the local authority, particularly in relation to leadership from an executive headteacher, it is clear that the support is helping senior leaders, teaching staff and members of the governing body to increasingly stand on their own two feet. A good example of this is that the new action plan was devised independently of the local authority, and it is suitably fit for purpose. Increasingly, staff provide support and development for one another and use external support to validate what they are doing and to discuss ways forward, rather than needing specific training or guidance.

Priorities for further improvement

No additional priorities are identified at this time.