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10 March 2011

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

Dear Mrs Lewis

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hindley Sure Start Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 March 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2010. 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

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 Sure Start Nursery

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 March 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, two representatives from the local authority, staff and children.

Context

Since the last inspection one part-time teacher is absent on long-term sick leave and a teaching assistant is on maternity leave. Staff already employed by the school are covering these absences. Another part-time teacher remains on long term absence and a teaching assistant on maternity leave. These absences are also covered internally.

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

Data shows that children continue to improve their progress in all aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are becoming confident learners and are happy to use all the areas available to them, both indoors and outdoors. They speak readily to adults in the setting and to visitors about what they are learning. For example, a girl was keen to show the inspector her charcoal drawing and to talk about it. On another occasion, a boy playing with a model spider took on the voice and actions of 'Incy Wincy Spider' in response to learning the rhyme.

Children who are new to the setting work happily alongside their peers. They know the routines and respond well to instructions from staff. Children practise the 'good listening, good sitting' in group time and respond well to their key workers and increasingly listen well to their peers. For example, following a lesson about long and short, children were happy to measure each other against 'Jasper's sticks' and the more able were using the mathematical language 'taller than, shorter than' confidently. Children's levels of concentration are improving. In one lesson, children were cutting fruit to make a kebab. They focused exceptionally well, using the knife carefully and making good progress in their ability to slice fruit. The focus on counting during changes to activities and in circle time is enabling children to gain a good understanding of the order of numbers. In one lesson a boy was clearly highly motivated by using the sparkly counting stick to count to nine successfully.

On some occasions, children's progress falters because staff intervention is not quick enough. For example, children painting had not grasped the order of putting the

brush in water then in the paint then onto the paper. Because staff did not intervene and teach this skill, they continued to paint the paper with water. On other occasions, children were not encouraged to tidy up following their activity, so they were not learning about responsibility for their actions.

Parents appreciate the high quality of the learning journey books. These are attractive and provide appropriate information about the children's experience at nursery. In addition, the busy wall and information on entry to the nursery is encouraging parents to participate in their children's learning.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise children's attainment and ensure consistent progress across the areas of learning – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

As reported at the last monitoring inspection, children's behaviour continues to improve. Where children disagreed with each other over play equipment staff handled this appropriately, encouraging children to share and take turns. Children enjoy the healthy snacks on offer and children who have a lunch prepared by the school eat a well balanced diet. Children are active in their play outdoors and this encourages them to be fit and healthy.

The effectiveness of provision

Staff hold detailed information on children's attainment and are using this more effectively to plan the curriculum to meet children's learning needs. Their regular assessments of children's progress are informing activities on a weekly basis. Staff say they are becoming more confident at this aspect of their work and can see how it is leading to improving outcomes for pupils. Because assessment information is more detailed, staff are gaining a clearer picture of which children need additional support and are targeting them in their planning. This is starting to accelerate children's progress.

The six lessons observed during the inspection were good and one was outstanding. The inspector did not observe any inadequate teaching during this visit. Staff plan activities carefully and are clear about what they want children to learn from their lessons. In the outstanding lesson, the practitioner immersed the children in the story 'Shhh!' She placed a pair of 'giant shoes' in the centre of the room and used her voice exceptionally well to encourage the children to join in with the story. Consequently, children continued the story outside the lesson, questioning staff and visitors about whether they had seen the giant, demonstrating their understanding by their use of story language.

Staff are continuing to develop the areas for learning both indoors and outdoors. New trolleys containing literacy and numeracy activities are in use outdoors. Displays in the classroom are reflecting the curriculum more effectively and children's work is becoming a stronger feature.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are driving school improvement appropriately. They continue to show determination to raise staff aspirations and improve practice and their impact on this is becoming more evident across the school's work. Their system for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress is beginning to have a good impact on pupils' attainment. Staff now know what they are responsible for and to whom they are accountable. This means they are able to work more effectively as a team. Senior leaders appreciate the good quality support from the local authority adviser and consultants in this aspect of their work. Staff talked about increasing their professionalism and support for one another. This was evident during observations of the setting, particularly in the way staff dovetailed support for children across both classes. Staff morale is improving and their aspirations are high. They are supportive of the leadership and say they appreciate the clear direction they receive from the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Capacity within the staff team is improving and teachers are rapidly taking more responsibility for children's outcomes.

The governing body continues to support the school. The Chair of the Governing Body is active in his role and clear about the way forward for the school. However, capacity within the governing body remains inadequate resulting in some necessary actions relating to difficult staffing issues not progressing quickly enough. Overall, this is slowing the school's progress on its journey out of special measures.

Progress since the last monitoring 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

Consultants and advisers from the local authority continue to support the school well to improve the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for children. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are appreciative of the high quality advice and guidance they receive with regard to systems for monitoring pupils' progress and staff roles and responsibilities. However, the support to the school from the local authority Human Resources department is inadequate. The governing body has not received sufficiently robust advice and guidance to enable them to deal with difficult

staffing issues within an appropriate timescale. This is resulting in staff unease and limiting the school's capacity to progress out of special measures.

Priorities for further improvement

- The local authority strengthens capacity within the governing body.
- The governing body takes decisive action to deal with difficult staffing issues.