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20 May 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 Pauline Berry, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 – 19 May 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 fourth 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 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

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 18 – 19 May 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. Thirteen lessons were observed, involving 14 teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, a group of parents and carers, teachers, senior leaders, a group of subject leaders and the School Improvement Partner. A telephone conversation was held with the principal inspector from the local authority.

Context

In the absence of the headteacher, the school continues to be led by the executive headteacher. There is a new teacher in Year 1 and a new Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) was appointed two weeks ago.

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

The continued good work by the assistant headteacher provides an increasingly clear picture about pupils' progress. The emerging picture for the end of this academic year indicates that, in general, pupils made satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics over the past 12 months and reached standards of work expected for their ages. Pupils' achievement in science is not so clear because these are early days for tracking skills in this subject. Attainment in science for Year 6 pupils is below national averages.

Some year groups and classes have made more progress than others, as reflected in a range in the quality of teaching seen during this visit and by senior leaders since the last visit. Pupils in Year 5 are making good progress this year in English and mathematics. In addition, recently moderation of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage confirms that children achieve a good level of development. Teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 indicate that the targets set have been met. This represents at least satisfactory progress and attainment that is in line with national averages. More pupils are achieving the higher levels. This is attributed to teachers' higher expectations and changes to the curriculum, ensuring greater challenge for the most able learners. The school's tracking information for pupils in Year 6 indicates that targets have been met for mathematics and for the proportions making two National Curriculum levels progress for both English and mathematics. Lower attainment in reading suggests that the overall target for English will not be met.

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

Concerns raised at the last monitoring inspection about pupils' attendance have been addressed successfully. A more consistent approach, together with good arrangements with the education welfare officer, has led to increased attendance in most year groups and a reduction in persistent absence from 12 pupils to one pupil. Improvement is also evident in pupils' enjoyment at playtimes. This is because of good opportunities to play with a range of equipment, supported by improved supervision and participation of the staff on duty at these times. Slippage in pupils' care of their environment has been addressed well. Corridors and classrooms have had a thorough make-over, presenting pupils with higher aspirations to keep the school tidy and use displays and resources to help with their learning.

The effectiveness of provision

The overall quality of teaching has been maintained. Although some inadequate teaching was identified during this inspection, as is also the case in the school's monitoring, there is now some outstanding teaching and consistently good learning in some classes. Teachers continue to take good advantage of, and value, the support from senior leaders and consultants. With good training from the assistant headteacher, they take increasing responsibility for identifying underperformance accurately through the use of assessment information. 'Peer mentoring' with senior leaders and subject leaders is very popular with teachers because it helps them to reflect on the quality of their teaching in relating to pupils' learning and to make changes. Other improvements include more opportunities for pupils to respond to challenging questions and better deployment of support staff to assess pupils' responses and encourage independent work from those who are less able.

Weaknesses in teaching centre on the extent of pupils' active involvement in their learning albeit through teachers' marking and feedback or opportunities to show what they know and can do. For example, teachers do not always make the most of pupils' responses to stretch their thinking and at other times opportunities planned for different tasks for different ability groups do not occur in practice. Sometimes teachers spend too much time talking at the expense of time for pupils to practice and develop their skills. A focus on 'doing' the task is sometimes emphasised more than what pupils will learn from the activity.

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

The executive headteacher is doing a good job in addressing the most important areas of school improvement. The dedication and rigour that she brings to the task is valued and respected. In a short period, she has brought together the things that will move different initiatives forward through complementary practice. For example, the work on assessment complements that of the development of subject leaders' expertise, enabling them to look more closely at the quality of the curriculum in relation to pupils' achievements. As a result, they have identified weaknesses in the teaching of letter sounds and the use of information and communication technology, and appropriate plans are in place to address these things. Subject leaders' action plans do not yet focus sufficiently on whole school priorities. The whole school action plan has run its course and plans are in place to ensure that the revised one focuses succinctly on raising pupils' attainment and links with action plans from subject leaders and others.

Higher expectations of subject leaders and those with additional professional responsibilities are helping to spread the load for monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching and learning. This extends to the role of the new SENCO. In a short space of time she has made a good start in auditing the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The registers for these pupils and for the most able learners are being revised. Improving the provision and outcomes for these two groups lags behind the development of other areas of the school's work and requires greater urgency.

Members of the governing body continue to challenge the work of the school well. They follow things through rigorously and are very clear about their responsibilities. Together with the executive headteacher, they are working on a budget plan to ensure that the school can operate more efficiently within the funds available.

There is increasing anxiety amongst parents, carers and staff about the future leadership of the school, creating uncertainty and misinformation. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency so that all are better informed and have their views taken into account as appropriate. In addition, the ten parents and carers that met with an inspector feel that there is insufficient communication about how well their children are doing and on aspects of the curriculum, such as reading and homework.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

External support

Support from the local authority is very favourably received by staff. The principal inspector and School Improvement Partner challenge the school's work and progress well, particularly through their regular monitoring board meetings. Although uncertainties remain about the future leadership of the school, the local authority has appropriate plans in place to ensure secure leadership for the autumn term.

Priorities for further improvement

No additional priorities are identified at this time.