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Ms Christine Curtis
Executive Headteacher
Woodlands Junior School
Loxford Lane
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Dear Ms Curtis

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Woodlands Junior School

Following my visit with Joanna Jones, additional inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 July 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2011. 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

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 Redbridge.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2011

- Raise attainment and accelerate the rate of pupils' progress in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders analyse the assessments of pupils' work in order to identify underachievement quickly and implement strategies to address it
 - ensuring that senior leaders robustly monitor these strategies to make certain they are fully effective.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by April 2012 by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders rigorously monitor teaching and provide effective feedback
 - improving teachers' planning and use of assessment so that the learning needs of different groups of pupils are met
 - improving the quality of marking in order to provide consistent guidance to pupils on the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring that pupils are fully involved in their learning in lessons.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by ensuring that it challenges and holds senior school leaders to account for pupils' attainment and progress and the quality of teaching in the school.

Special measures: monitoring of Woodlands Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 July 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed parts of 16 lessons taught by 16 teachers. Six observations were conducted jointly with the executive headteacher and the consultant headteacher. Inspectors met with school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the incoming executive headteacher. They also talked to pupils in lessons and met with 28 pupils from across Years 3 to 6. Inspectors looked at teachers' planning and scrutinised the work of 12 pupils from Years 4 and 5. Inspectors also examined a range of school documents, including self-evaluation, monitoring and information about pupils' progress and attainment.

Context

The substantive headteacher has been absent due to illness since the previous inspection. A temporary executive headteacher has been in post for three days each week since February. She has been supported by a consultant headteacher who works with the school for one day a week. They complete their duties at the end of this term. For September, an executive headteacher will be in post for 2.5 days each week, supported by a full-time associate headteacher. They have been appointed until July 2012.

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

Unvalidated results from the 2011 National Curriculum tests indicate that the attainment of Year 6 pupils is still too low. Their progress since joining the school has been too slow. However, their progress accelerated following the previous inspection and attainment rose slightly in both English and mathematics. This is because leaders quickly put in place strategies to support these pupils, including targeted teaching, one-to-one support and an Easter school. Leaders have begun to evaluate the impact of these interventions in order to improve provision for next year. Inspection evidence and the school's more reliable information about pupils' progress indicate that achievement is improving gradually in other year groups. Nevertheless, although pupils are beginning to catch up on past underperformance, there remain variations within and across different year groups.

The executive headteacher and consultant headteacher have provided strong and judicious leadership, raising expectations among staff and restructuring leadership roles and responsibilities. The deputy headteachers now analyse information about the pupils' progress more systematically in order to identify areas of underperformance. They have rightly identified whole-school priorities for improvement and particular issues within the year groups they are responsible for.

In addition, the meetings that senior leaders have with teachers about pupils' progress are becoming more rigorous and now focus on every pupil in a given class.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment and accelerate the rate of pupils' progress in English and mathematics – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is improving and the proportion of good lessons is increasing gradually. No inadequate lessons were observed during the monitoring visit. The executive headteacher and consultant headteacher have monitored teaching closely since the previous inspection. Other senior leaders have had fewer opportunities to conduct lesson observations. Teachers have benefited from regular feedback on their performance. Twelve teachers have undertaken an effective teacher programme led by successful practitioners from a partner school. This has helped them to focus more closely on meeting the needs of different pupils. Teachers' planning has improved. Teachers now have more regular opportunities to plan together. Consequently, there is greater consistency across year groups and plans generally indicate activities that are targeted at pupils of differing abilities. However, some plans do not identify work that is sufficiently challenging, particularly for the more able pupils. Furthermore, plans make only limited reference to the way in which other adults are to be deployed. A revised marking policy has been implemented, marking is more regular and teachers now provide clearer guidance on how pupils can improve their work. However, this is less well developed in mathematics and currently there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to respond to their teachers' advice.

As a result of improved moderation, teacher assessment information is gradually becoming more reliable. Teachers use their enhanced understanding of pupils' prior learning to plan lessons that are generally more demanding and involve pupils more fully. Pupils appreciate that teachers try 'to help us achieve our goals'. They enjoy the practical activities they do in mathematics and science. In English, one pupil noted how a drama activity had helped her to better understand the characters in 'The Highwayman'. Pupils also have increased opportunities to discuss their learning, solve problems and share ideas with their peers. In the best lessons, activities are imaginative and teachers set high expectations about what pupils need to achieve within a specific time period. In these lessons, teachers often use interactive whiteboards or visualisers to model processes or show examples of good work. In most lessons, teachers promote paired discussions and their questioning encourages pupils to extend their responses. Teachers often provide pupils with 'speaking frames' or useful phrases to help them improve the quality of their spoken answers. However, inconsistencies remain. In some lessons, the teachers' introductions are

too long, discussion work is less well managed and pupils are given too much unstructured time to work on tasks. In these lessons their rate of progress slows and some pupils become restless. Often, pupils do not move onto the more challenging work that is planned quickly enough. In some lessons, the success criteria that help pupils understand what they need to achieve are not sufficiently challenging. This means that while pupils complete the set tasks they do not always make sufficient progress towards their personal targets.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by April 2012 – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The Chair of the Governing Body understands the school's priorities for development. The capacity of the wider governing body is increasing steadily as its members take on specific monitoring responsibilities. For example, individual governors are now linked to year groups. They have met with staff, observed lessons and reviewed information about pupils' achievement. Members of the governing body are also gaining a better understanding of the information they receive about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. They are beginning to ask more challenging questions that hold leaders to account for these areas but some questions are still too general. A skills audit has helped governors to identify their strengths and areas for development. Nevertheless, further training is needed to ensure that all governors have a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by ensuring that it challenges and holds senior leaders to account for pupils' attainment and progress and the quality of teaching in the school – satisfactory

External support

The local authority statement of action meets requirements. Since the previous inspection, the local authority has played a crucial role in securing continuity of leadership for the school. Support from advisers, consultants and advanced skills teachers have been well received and targeted on the key areas for improvement. The impact of this support can be seen particularly in the improving quality of teachers' planning and their use of assessment. A recent local authority led review of teaching provided senior leaders with a detailed evaluation of the current strengths

and areas for development in provision. Support for the governing body has helped its members to improve their systems. However, although planned, training has yet to take place that will help members of the governing body understand their roles and responsibilities more fully. The former school improvement adviser will continue to work with the school as a local authority associate adviser. She provides the school with effective challenge and ensures that local authority support is well coordinated.