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24 November 2011

Mr Z Mohamed
Headteacher
Linden Primary School
Headland Road
Evington
Leicester
LE5 6AD

Dear Mr Mohamed

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Linden Primary School

Following my visit with Simon Griffiths, additional inspector, to your school on 22 and 23 November 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 April 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that procedures for making the school a safe place to learn are implemented urgently and rigorously.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - establishing a shared vision that focuses on raising pupils' attainment and increasing their rates of progress
 - developing robust management systems, rigorous self-evaluation and effective improvement planning
 - ensuring that whole-school strategies are implemented fully by all and evaluated carefully to check for their effectiveness
 - establishing effective engagement and communication systems between the governing body, staff, and parents and carers
 - ensuring that all statutory procedures and regulations are fully implemented and suitably recorded and reported.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that 100% is at least satisfactory and 50% is at least good by December 2011, by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently to challenge the most-able pupils
 - ensuring that all pupils have suitable opportunities to practise and consolidate their learning
 - using marking consistently to inform pupils of their next steps in learning
 - improving pupils' language skills by providing more opportunities for pupils to talk to each other and participate actively in their learning
 - implementing a curriculum that caters for the needs of all pupils.
- Work more effectively with parents and carers to promote good attendance.

Special measures: monitoring of Linden Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 22–23 November 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the substantive headteacher, the interim headteacher, the senior leadership team and other members of staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), two representatives from the local authority, a small number of parents and carers and individual and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in July 2011, the substantive headteacher has been reinstated from suspension and is making a phased return to work. The interim headteacher is working with the substantive headteacher to lead the school during this transitional period before leaving at the end of the autumn term. Three teachers are also leaving the school at the end of the year and new appointments have been made for the spring term. The IEB is currently acting as the school's governing body.

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

The rate at which pupils learn and make progress is continuing to improve. Lesson observations confirm that this is particularly evident where the quality of teaching is focused and planned carefully to meet pupils' needs. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are being supported well to help them make good progress, particularly in developing their language skills. Across the rest of the school, pupils make satisfactory progress in most lessons and do well over time. Pupils' attainment is improving as teachers focus more precisely on identifying the learning pupils will achieve in each lesson. The school is tracking pupils' development carefully to monitor progress against the recently introduced challenging targets for each class and year group. Analysis of the school's attainment data has identified that some pupils from minority ethnic groups are making slower progress than others and attaining lower standards. As a consequence, teachers are being supported to refine their practice so as to begin closing the attainment gaps that exist between different groups.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are proud of their school. They feel safe and talk positively about the work undertaken recently to improve the physical environment. They get on well together and enjoy learning about pupils' different backgrounds and cultures. It is also noticeable how supportive they are of those pupils who have recently arrived from other countries, particularly when those pupils have only a limited command of the

English language. Pupils are polite and courteous around the school and display good manners. The school's behaviour procedures work well and encourage pupils to get on and work together successfully. As a result, behaviour around the school is often good with pupils playing well together at break time and sharing playground equipment. In lessons, behaviour is also often good but there are occasions when pupils lose interest, which results in off-task behaviour and reduces pupils' learning.

The school is working hard to engage with families, particularly in its efforts to improve pupils' attendance. The school has introduced a zero-tolerance policy for holidays taken during term time. The senior leaders are endeavouring to explain to parents and carers the impact of removing pupils for long holidays taken during the school term. Their efforts are being rewarded as more families are complying with the school's policies and this success is being reflected in the higher levels of pupils' attendance currently being recorded.

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

- work more effectively with parents and carers to promote good attendance – good.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has continued to improve since the previous monitoring inspection. Teachers are planning lessons carefully with clear learning objectives in mind. Although there is still variation across the school, there are more good lessons than previously, which enable pupils to achieve the planned learning objectives. Relationships are good and pupils respond readily to instructions and guidance. In the more effective lessons, teachers maintain a good pace and do not allow time to slip. In addition, teaching assistants are deployed well in the better lessons so that pupils benefit from working in smaller groups and receive tailored individual attention. This was particularly noticeable in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 when teaching assistants led specific teaching activities, such as delivering phonic work with small numbers of pupils. They also use time well to assess and record pupils' development, so as to inform the next steps of learning.

Classrooms are orderly and provide good learning spaces. Displays are bright, informative and relevant to pupils. Teachers often act as good role models, for example by writing neatly on whiteboards, which helps pupils recognise the standards expected. However, teachers are not making these high standards explicit enough by stating clearly and unambiguously what they require of different ability pupils. As a consequence, much of the work in pupils' books is not of a high enough standard and there is too much variation in the amount of work produced. The lack of a consistent approach across the school about how pupils should set their work out is having a detrimental impact on pupils' progress. It is also resulting in teachers

working with older classes having to repeat work because pupils have not consolidated their previous learning.

The introduction of a recently revised marking policy is helping to ensure greater consistency of marking. Pupils appreciate the teachers' written comments and they are motivated by the encouragement they are given. They are less positive about the marking of their homework, which can be quite cursory. The recent staffing absences have resulted in some confusion over the routines for completion of homework and this has also had a negative impact on its effectiveness. The school has taken action by employing full-time teachers for the start of the spring term.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's senior leadership team work together well. They have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and they are taking appropriate action to improve matters. The substantive headteacher's phased return to work is being managed well. The programme of working alongside the interim headteacher and the senior leaders is ensuring a smooth transfer of leadership and helping to reduce the potential for any loss of momentum. The current drive to strengthen the quality of teaching is appropriate and bringing about improvement. The senior leaders are monitoring lessons regularly to provide supportive and constructive guidance to teachers about how the effectiveness of their teaching could be enhanced. Their judgements about the quality of teaching are accurate, which is helping to build confidence in knowing where further improvement is required. There is a growing sense of accountability across the school. Phase leaders, who have responsibility for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and attainment in each key stage, are responsible for managing the performance of teachers in their team. Challenging targets have been set, and teachers are increasingly being held to account for their performance. Assessments are conducted each half term to evaluate pupils' progress and to identify where pupils can improve. As yet, the phase leaders and subject leaders are still developing confidence and skills to drive up standards. They have not taken full ownership for monitoring the quality of work being produced in their phases and challenging when weaknesses are identified.

The IEB is playing a full role in supporting and challenging the school as it pursues its improvement agenda. Its members are working closely with the senior leaders to strengthen the school's provision and thereby raise standards. Meetings are held regularly, with an agenda that focuses strongly on embedding ambition and monitoring progress against each area of the school's improvement plan. The school has taken appropriate action to comply with its statutory requirements, including implementing a plan to promote community cohesion. The school's initiatives to

engage with families are having a positive impact on rebuilding and strengthening relationships. The school has introduced a number of ways to communicate with parents and carers. These include the use of texts and the development of an enhanced school's website, so that parents and carers have access to up-to-date and easily accessible information.

The school's leaders have continued to enhance security in order to safeguard pupils. Building work has been commissioned to install new doors and safety fencing to prevent unauthorised access to the school site and help to maintain pupils' safety. Much of the work has been already been completed and the expectation is that it will all be finished before the end of term.

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

- ensure that procedures for making the school a safe place to learn are implemented urgently and rigorously – satisfactory
- improve leadership and management at all levels – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide high quality support to the school. Specialist consultants are working successfully with staff to strengthen the quality of teaching and drive improvement by building capacity across the school. For example, by working closely with the team in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the provision has been totally transformed into a vibrant and stimulating learning environment. As a result, the children are being provided with high quality teaching which is enabling them to make good progress.