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9 March 2012

Ms L Harrowell  
Headteacher  
Larkwood Primary School  
New Road  
London  
E4 8ET

Dear Ms Harrowell

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Larkwood Primary School**

Following my visit with Gill Walley, Additional inspector, to your school on 7–8 March 2012, 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 October 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 only be appointed in Years 5 and 6 and under the strict condition that they are mentored by the deputy headteacher or one of the assistant headteachers.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Waltham Forest.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis

**Additional inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2011**

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate progress by:
  - developing staff expertise in teaching mathematics
  - making better use of assessment information to plan lessons that meet the learning needs of all pupils
  - planning opportunities for pupils to reflect on and respond to their teachers' marking and other feedback
  - ensuring that support staff are deployed to maximise learning throughout each lesson.
  
- Develop the curriculum so that pupils improve their key skills by:
  - providing more interesting and engaging contexts to stimulate writing in different subjects, especially for boys
  - strengthening the pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support and extend their learning across subjects
  - implementing a consistent approach to the development of reading skills.
  
- Accelerate the children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in numeracy in particular by:
  - improving the provision and teaching in the Reception classes
  - matching activities to the children's needs and interests
  - sharing good practice more effectively so that learning flows freely between inside and outdoors
  - ensuring that planned actions are carried out rigorously and consistently.
  
- Make more effective use of assessment information and other data in order to:
  - identify and take action when pupils are falling behind their targets
  - monitor the achievement of groups of pupils and take action when gaps emerge with national expectations
  - evaluate the school's performance.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Larkwood Primary School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 7–8 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a group of pupils from Year 6.

#### **Context**

There have been significant staffing changes since the school was inspected. Of the 23 classes, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, 10 are taught by new teachers. In addition, two assistant headteachers have taken up post.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Inspection findings, supported by the school's tracking of children's performance, show that progress for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is accelerating. Progress in learning letters and sounds is good as the result of the successful recent implementation of a commercial scheme to develop children's key skills in communication, language and literacy. Children have good opportunities to initiate their own learning and there is a much stronger focus on children moving freely between activities indoors and outdoors. The provision to support children's learning is much improved, although insufficient focus is given to developing the calculating strand within problem solving, reasoning and numeracy.

In mathematics, standards at the end of Year 2 have been low for the last five years. An analysis of pupils' books in the current Year 2 confirms that inadequate progress and low standards still exist. Pupils simply do not do enough mathematics to ensure progress is satisfactory or better. Teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are not good enough. However, there are encouraging signs of improving skills in reading across Key Stage 1 because of teachers' effective use of the new scheme of work for reading and writing.

In Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 6 are on track to attain broadly average standards in English and mathematics. Progress is improving for most pupils, especially that of boys in English. There is evidence that the gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not is beginning to close. However, the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs remains inadequate.

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

Accelerate the children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in numeracy – satisfactory

### **The quality of teaching**

Apart from in Year 2, where teaching in mathematics over time is inadequate, there is improvement in teachers' expertise in teaching the subject. In Key Stage 2, teachers manage effectively the grouping of pupils by ability. In most lessons, work is planned carefully to meet the still varying ability levels within each group. All lessons have clear learning intentions and success criteria, both of which are shared with pupils. Inconsistency remains in that all teachers do not make it explicitly clear as to what pupils should learn by the end of each lesson. The teaching of guided reading is inconsistent. Where it is inadequate, pupils make no progress in developing key skills during the session.

Teachers use assessment information more effectively in order to plan pupils' learning, especially in meeting the differing needs within the class. They have a greater understanding of how to develop lessons to build on pupils' prior learning, although it is less secure for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. While teachers mark pupils work on a regular basis, inconsistency remains across the school in informing pupils of their next steps in learning and linking these to their individual targets in literacy and numeracy. There is a strength in that teachers, other than in Year 2, are consistent in telling pupils how well they are doing.

Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in most lessons and make a positive contribution at the beginning of lessons to support pupils in listening to and following the teacher's instructions. In the main part of lessons, they support individuals and/or groups effectively, including in the teaching of letters and sounds. They are particularly effective in working to support individuals who find sustaining concentration a challenge.

The new senior leadership team has introduced a more effective system for tracking the performance of groups of pupils, especially by gender and ethnicity. However, the system currently does not monitor sufficiently the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The introduction of pupil progress meetings has a positive impact of holding teachers to account for the progress of their pupils. However, because tracking systems are still new and need embedding, there is limited evidence of their impact over time on pupils' performance.

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

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate progress – satisfactory

- Make more effective use of assessment information and other data – satisfactory

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils talked very confidently about much improved behaviour since the school was put into special measures. They value the reward system, including gaining merits for good work and behaviour. In most lessons and around the school, pupils worked hard and behaved sensibly. Attendance is broadly average and staff work hard to support pupils whose attendance causes concern.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The school has recently introduced the use of the International Primary Curriculum. It already proves to be motivating staff and pupils, especially in developing cross-curricular links. For example in Year 6, pupils show good skills in reading for research and then writing confidently about different key aspects of the Second World War. Pupils enjoy homework much more, including baking at home using recipes from that era. There is good evidence to show that the themes chosen by staff engage the boys more purposefully in learning. With the school's information and communication technology suite fully operational and with the use of laptop computers available in classrooms, pupils have far more opportunities to develop their key skills. The introduction of the commercial reading scheme contributes to much more effective teaching of reading, especially letters and sounds (phonics). However, in guided reading, inconsistency remains in extending pupils' reading skills in these lessons.

The senior leadership team has a detailed understanding of the school's priorities. The headteacher took swift and decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and to create a leadership team with expertise in primary education. There is a clear vision for improvement. The Interim Executive Board provides effective support and challenge in the drive for improvement. There are clear signs of overall improvement but with a number of key initiatives implemented recently, it is too early to measure the full impact of these on pupils' learning.

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

- Develop the curriculum so that pupils improve their key skills – satisfactory

### **External support**

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose. The local authority, through the use of consultants, provides effective support for the school, especially in the improvements made to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Support for improving the teaching of reading and mathematics has for the most part

contributed to improvement, although it has not been so strong in addressing issues in Year 2.