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8 March 2012

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 Lynn Lowery, additional inspector, to your school on 6–7 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 third 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 – good.

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 third monitoring inspection on 6–7 March 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team and other members of staff, a member of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), a representative from the local authority, a small number of parents and carers and individual and groups of pupils. The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with the Chair of the IEB.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in November 2011, the substantive headteacher has been reinstated to lead the school. The interim headteacher left in December, after his temporary contract ended. The three teachers who also left the school at the end of December have been replaced with new appointments. The mathematics subject leader has returned after a period of illness. The IEB has recruited two parents to shadow their meetings and promote links with families and the local community.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Evidence arising from lesson observations show that pupils are making better progress than previously. Pupils are focused and engaged on suitably planned learning activities, which they enjoy. The quality of lesson plans is continuing to improve and teachers are paying greater attention to identifying precisely what pupils will learn in each lesson. Teachers are taking care to explain the lesson's learning objectives to pupils, which is helping to raise their understanding about the lesson's purpose and the importance of education. Teachers are also making their expectations clearer to pupils about the quality and quantity of work to be completed each lesson. As a result, the quality of pupils' work is showing some recent improvement. However, pupils' handwriting and presentation have still not reached the standard expected. The school's recent analysis of pupils' progress show that all year groups are now making at least satisfactory progress, although it is faster in some year groups than others. Consequently, pupils' attainment is improving, with the result that standards overall are rising. The improvement is particularly noticeable in reading as pupils make accelerated progress.

The quality of teaching

All the observed lessons were satisfactory or good. The inspection evidence matches and confirms the school's evaluation and the local authority's recent scrutiny that the quality of teaching and learning is continuing to improve. The classrooms are orderly

learning spaces that are organised well to enable pupils to make progress. Displays are bright and attractive and often feature pupils' work, which adds to the welcoming atmosphere. Teachers are becoming more ambitious at making learning fun and relevant. For example, in the Year 6 classes, pupils were busy preparing persuasive arguments for and against children choosing their own bedtime. Teachers are also using opportunities to enable pupils to learn first-hand by providing practical activities. This approach increases the excitement pupils experience when learning. This is particularly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where staff plan a wide range of practical activities that provide good opportunities to broaden children's knowledge and understanding of the world. However, other opportunities to promote links between subjects are not being identified clearly enough, which prevents pupils from applying their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

Teachers are planning their lessons carefully to ensure that activities are matched to pupils' abilities and interests. They are assessing pupils' learning with increasing accuracy and developing their skill at identifying particular problems individuals encounter. This is helping to ensure that teachers are planning to address pupils' misconceptions and build on their prior learning. They also plan the deployment of teaching assistants well to support the learning in the classroom. The most effective support occurs when teaching assistants have been briefed well and are clear about their role and have a good understanding of how to encourage pupils' learning. In a few instances, teachers are recording the appropriate National Curriculum levels in their planning. When this information is shared with pupils it helps them to gain a clearer understanding of how well they are performing and how they can improve. It also supports teachers' monitoring and assessment of pupils' academic development. As yet, teachers are not planning routinely for opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The recently introduced marking policy has improved the quality of teachers' written feedback to pupils. The most effective feedback is evident in pupils' literacy and numeracy books, where comments not only acknowledge and praise completion of work but also explain how it could be improved. For homework and other subjects, the marking is cursory, often consisting of a simple tick or stamp which does not encourage or challenge pupils sufficiently to attain more highly. The recording of pupils' reading records is also variable across the school, which leaves parents unsure of how well pupils are progressing.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and they apply themselves diligently in lessons. They work together

collaboratively and willingly share ideas when asked to contribute to partner work. They are responsive to teachers' directions and instructions and pay good attention in class. As the quality of teaching has improved, the number of incidents of off-task behaviour has reduced. This is because lessons are of more interest to pupils and the activities often draw upon their experiences.

The school's strategies to improve pupils' attendance are continuing to be successful. Currently, attendance levels show the school to be on track to be above average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. However, a relatively large number of pupils only arrive at school close to the time when the bell is due to ring, which results in some being slightly late. This has safety implications for pupils wishing to cross the road as they arrive after the crossing patrol has left. This is relevant as a pupil at the school was recently injured in a traffic accident. School leaders have responded to the incident by seeking ways to improve road safety in the locality. Working with the local politician and Leicester City Council, it has been agreed to introduce a number of traffic-calming measures outside the school. Leaders are also working with parents, carers and local residents to find additional car parking facilities to encourage drivers to park legally and safely. Importantly, they have also worked to increase pupils' awareness and understanding of being safe.

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

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

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The school has adjusted quickly and successfully to the reinstatement of headteacher. Importantly, there has been no loss of momentum in driving the school's improvement plans. The leadership team is focused on strengthening the school and bringing about the improvements needed. Working together, they have an accurate knowledge of the school's strengths and the areas needing development. Encouragingly, they also are increasingly focused on promoting a vision for the school's future development as it moves forward.

The increasing involvement of the phase leaders, who have responsibility for the quality of pupils' learning in different year groups, has strengthened the leadership team. In particular, they are developing the skills to analyse data and to monitor and evaluate performance in classrooms. Similarly, the subject leaders for English and mathematics are also making a greater contribution to school improvement by taking action to raise attainment. For instance, a handwriting scheme is being introduced and the school is developing links with a partner school to strengthen the quality of mathematics teaching.

The recent turbulence in staffing has reduced following the appointment of three new teachers and the return of the mathematics subject leader.

The IEB meets regularly to review the progress being achieved and to hold school leaders to account. They are ambitious for improvement and very determined that the school will improve. The records of meetings show a clear focus on analysing the school data and consideration of the impact of each improvement strategy on the school's development. The quality of information being presented to the IEB by leaders has improved and shows a much higher level of analysis than was evident previously.

Security measures continue to be strengthened, which has ensured that pupils are kept safe. Additional measures, such as further improvements to doors and lighting, are scheduled to be completed.

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 – good.

External support

The local authority is working closely with the school to provide the support required. Advisers are working with members of staff to strengthen classroom performance and also to develop the leadership skills needed to enable staff to take on additional responsibilities. The authority's consultants are monitoring the school's progress and evaluating impact against each of the improvement plan's priorities. The local authority has encouraged and facilitated the links being made with an outstanding Leicestershire primary school to promote teachers' and leaders' professional development.