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22 March 2012

Mrs Joan McGrath  
Executive headteacher  
Woodlands Junior School  
Loxford Lane  
Ilford  
Essex  
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Dear Mrs McGrath

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Woodlands Junior School**

Following my visit with Jennifer Bax, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 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 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

One newly qualified teacher 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 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 monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons taught by 14 teachers. They also conducted a learning walk in Year 5. Five lesson observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors met with school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. They talked to pupils in lessons and met with two groups of pupils from Year 5 and Year 6. They also met with a group of 10 parents and carers. Inspectors reviewed teachers' planning and scrutinised pupils' work in lessons. Inspectors also examined a range of school documents, including self-evaluation and information about pupils' current achievement.

#### **Context**

The executive headteacher has been in post since September. Her contract has been extended until August 2013. The associate headteacher will also continue in post until August 2013. A part-time deputy headteacher joined the school in January and will remain in post until August 2012. A full-time assistant headteacher, who will have responsibility for inclusion, has been appointed from April 2012. Four teachers, including two year group leaders, leave at Easter.

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

In general, the rate of progress made by pupils in English and mathematics has increased markedly from a very low starting point. Many pupils are now making up quickly for significant past underachievement. Consequently, while still below the average, current levels of attainment are now closer to those expected. However, there are stubborn variations within some year groups, and the progress made by pupils in Year 5 is too slow.

In Year 6, progress in mathematics and reading has sometimes been rapid. Pupils' confidence with their times tables has improved because of daily 'snappy maths' sessions. Their attainment in reading is now closer to the national average. However, attainment in writing remains too low. A more consistent approach to the teaching of writing is beginning to address the gaps in pupils' skills. Pupils value the introduction of 'genre books' and benefit from regular opportunities to write for sustained periods in their 'Big Writing' sessions. Nevertheless, in lessons, pupils do not always begin their independent writing quickly enough and there are currently too few opportunities to see examples of successful writing at and above their target levels.

The executive headteacher and associate headteacher are dynamic and resilient. They have successfully improved provision. The learning environment is now vibrant. Pupils look smart in their uniforms and attendance, in all year groups, is improving. Senior leaders analyse information from regular monitoring of pupils' achievement closely. This information is being used with increasing precision in meetings where teachers discuss pupils' progress. Consequently, teachers are becoming more accountable. The capacity of senior leaders has been strengthened by the appointment of a temporary deputy headteacher. However, too much responsibility rests chiefly on the shoulders of the executive headteacher and the associate headteacher. The capacity of wider leadership remains too limited, especially at middle leader level.

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

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

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching has improved steadily in spite of continuing high staff turnover. The proportion of consistently good teaching has doubled since September. Much of the satisfactory teaching has good features. Nevertheless, a small, but stubborn, proportion of teaching remains inadequate. Parents and carers agree that some teaching is good. However, they share the school's concern that frequent changes to teachers have affected the progress made by some children.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Their feedback to teachers, allied to well-targeted staff training, is improving provision. There has been a discernible improvement in teachers' use of success criteria for learning. Expressed as 'I can' statements, criteria are usually linked appropriately to the skills and knowledge that pupils need to master. In lessons, these criteria are used more consistently to assess progress towards the pupils' personal targets. Planning is improving as a result of weekly monitoring and feedback from the deputy headteacher. In the best lessons, activities are relevant to the pupils' needs and interests. Nevertheless, while the plans identify activities for pupils of different abilities, they are sometimes too general and/or lack sufficient challenge.

The use of 'talking partners' is well embedded. Pupils collaborate productively when working in pairs and small groups. Regular use is made of mini-whiteboards, visualisers and physical starts to lessons to make learning more interactive. Many pupils are inquisitive learners and engage eagerly in discussions about their learning. They often use 'technical' vocabulary with confidence and understanding. Teachers generally employ a range of questions when facilitating class discussions. The best

ensure that pupils are challenged to extend their responses, particularly when explaining processes or giving reasons. Nevertheless, some questioning is superficial and teachers rarely target their questions at pupils with different levels of ability.

The pace of learning in some lessons is too slow. Some teachers spend too much time introducing the lesson. Consequently, the amount of time available for pupils to apply their learning is limited. In these lessons, pupils often become fidgety or go off task. Parents and carers are right in suggesting that where teaching is less engaging, it sometimes leads to poor behaviour. However, parents and carers, and pupils, are generally positive about the impact of recent changes to the school's behaviour management processes, such as 'Restart'. They say that increased midday supervision and additional play activities at lunchtime have improved behaviour and safety.

Marking is more regular and teachers' comments are more focused. Pupils take more pride in their books and work is usually neatly presented. Pupils usually know what they need to do to improve their work and value the 'even better if' comments. Nevertheless, there is still limited evidence in books that pupils respond regularly to teachers' comments or make corrections.

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

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

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

The Chair of the Governing Body has an accurate view of the school's priorities for development. She is well supported by the Vice Chair and a small core of governors who actively challenge school leaders. Fortnightly review meetings with senior leaders and the local authority mean that the Chair of Governors is well informed about progress against the key inspection priorities. Members of the governing body visit the school more regularly and are increasingly involved in evaluating the school's work. They are better informed about the views of pupils, parents and carers, and staff. For example, the Chair of the Governing Body recently met with pupils to discuss their views on learning. The findings from these discussions are displayed prominently for the school community to see on the 'governors' board'.

However, the capacity of the governing body is currently limited beyond a few individuals. Attendance at governing body committee meetings, although improved, is not good enough. Moreover, some members of the governing body have found it hard to rise to the challenge of supporting the school through special measures.

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

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

### **External support**

The local authority and the school work together closely. Support in mathematics has helped teachers to develop their confidence in delivering the successful 'snappy maths' sessions. Support on 'guided reading' has had a positive impact on increasing pupils' enjoyment of and progress in reading. Nevertheless, some teachers do not organise their guided reading sessions in a sufficiently regular or structured manner.

The local authority link representative has an accurate view of the school's strengths and which areas of its work need to improve most urgently. The local authority has supported the school proactively in seeking to recruit high-quality staff, including senior leaders. There are well-devised plans in place to ensure that the school improves over the longer term. However, the immediate impact on increasing the capacity of wider leadership and governance has been more limited.

### **Priority for further improvement:**

- Consider radical strategies for widening the capacity of the governing body so that all of its members are more fully involved in supporting the school and holding leaders to account.