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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 Ann Short, Additional inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 June 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 second 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed in Years 3 and 4 under the strict condition that they are mentored by 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 second monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 June 2012

Evidence

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

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the local authority has reorganised support for its schools, with the result that the school is now supported by a Challenge Consultant. Two new members of staff have joined the senior leadership team.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, inspection findings, supported by the school's data and local authority moderation, indicate that children's achievement is good. There is no significant variation in the progress of boys and girls, except in calculation and knowledge and understanding of the world where the rate of boys' progress is faster than that of girls. Children have good opportunities to develop their skills in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy indoors and outdoors as the result of much improved provision. Children enjoy initiating their own learning and are supported effectively by adults through good-quality questioning and day-to-day assessment.

Since the previous monitoring visit, there has been a significant improvement in Year 2 in pupils' progress and standards in mathematics. Evidence indicates that pupils are on track to achieve broadly average standards. Pupils work much harder in lessons and they are provided with more challenge and support. Teachers' expectations as to what pupils can achieve have been raised, including marking and the presentation of work. Pupils' progress in calculating is good. However, there is still an over-reliance on the use of worksheets and insufficient focus on pupils' using and applying their calculation skills in problem-solving activities. In Years 1 and 2, the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is now, at least, satisfactory.

In Key Stage 2, pupils are still on track to achieve broadly average standards in English and mathematics. Boys show marked improvement in writing because lessons are planned to enthuse and motivate them. The gap between pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not has closed significantly.

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 – good

The quality of teaching

No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection and this supports the school's judgement. In all lessons, teachers share the learning objective with pupils and check that they understand it. For example in one lesson in Year 4, the teacher ensured that pupils knew the meaning of 'empathy'. Teachers share the success criteria for the lesson with pupils and, in the best lessons, check periodically with pupils that they are on target to meet them. Currently, there is insufficient focus on linking success criteria to pupils' individual targets. There has been significant improvement in the teaching of guided reading, with the result that pupils make good progress in these lessons, particularly in the key skill of comprehension. The introduction of peer reading where pupils in Year 5 act as reading buddies to those in Year 3 is a success.

Across the school, pupils spoke positively and enthusiastically about the 'green pen question'. As the result of much improved marking, teachers now ask a question to which pupils reply using a green pen and tell the teacher how they can improve their own work. This approach engages pupils much more effectively in understanding their next steps in learning. Teachers' planning is based more closely on their assessment of pupils' prior learning and work is matched much more closely to pupils' needs and the National Curriculum levels at which they work.

Teaching assistants continue to provide effective support for pupils in most lessons. They make a positive contribution in Key Stage 1 to the success of the use of a commercial scheme to raise achievement in reading and writing. In lessons, teaching assistants make a strong contribution, especially at the start, by ensuring all pupils are included and understand, for example the learning objective.

Senior leaders work closely with teachers to ensure that they are clear as to the breakdown of groups in their classes by gender, ability and ethnicity. However, currently systems to assess the progress and standards of pupils' progress in these groups are not fully embedded.

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

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In lessons, pupils work hard and sensibly. A particularly impressive feature is the way in which pupils support each other in lessons without prompting by the teacher or teaching assistant. Pupils in Year 6 said how much better the lining-up system is at lunchtime and how it has reduced 'silly behaviour' by a few. All pupils respond positively to the reward system, especially in gaining merits. In lessons, pupils show good levels of concentration and the ability to work independently. This, as observed in writing lessons in Year 4 and Year 5, is becoming a real strength. Attendance is broadly average and staff do everything they can to support pupils whose absence levels cause concern.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The International Primary Curriculum is firmly embedded in the school and has a positive impact in pupils' use and application of key skills across the curriculum. In Year 6, pupils demonstrated good skills in using the internet to research the strength, lightness, flexibility, breathability and waterproofing of clothes worn by competitors in the Olympics. Pupils have greater opportunities to use ICT to support their learning both in the ICT suite and using laptops in their classrooms. In Year 3, pupils showed good skills in creating a table to record their data in an investigation into the most popular Olympic events. The commercial reading scheme is firmly established in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 and contributes successfully to improving progress in reading and writing.

In discussion, pupils in Year 6 said how much they value the senior leadership team and the improvements it has made to their school. The strengthened team has detailed and very clear priorities aimed at improving school performance, especially the quality of teaching. As a result, there is discernible improvement in most aspects of the school's performance although important areas, for example the monitoring of the performance of groups and the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in Key Stage 2, are less well developed. The Interim Executive Board continues to provide effective support and challenge for the senior leadership team. There is an absolute commitment to school improvement.

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

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

External support

The local authority, through the use of consultants, provides effective support for the school and contributes positively to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The significant improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is the result of high quality support by the local authority's early years team.