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31 May 2012

Mrs N Barrand
Headteacher
Thomas Willingale School
The Broadway
Loughton
IG10 3SR

Dear Mrs Barrand

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Thomas Willingale School

Following my visit with Clementina Ogunsanwo, Additional Inspector, to your school on 29–30 May 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 September 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 in either Year 1, 2, 3 or 4.

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 Essex.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve standards in English and mathematics by:
 - making sure all groups of pupils and especially boys make consistently good or better progress in all lessons to eradicate underachievement
 - ensuring that tasks in lessons are sufficiently challenging and fully meet the needs of pupils
 - providing clear targets for pupils on what they need to do next to improve.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by ensuring that teachers:
 - use assessment information effectively to plan lessons that fully cater for the needs of all pupils
 - use time, resources and information and communication technology effectively to motivate and inspire pupils in lessons
 - provide opportunities for pupils to work with each other and be more active in their learning.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing leadership expertise across the school
 - establishing effective monitoring and evaluation practices by all those with leadership and management responsibilities
 - using data effectively to track the progress of pupils and set challenging targets for improvement
 - implementing plans for the promotion of community cohesion within a local, national and international context
 - fully engaging members of the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and holding school leaders to account.

- Ensure that all statutory requirements are fulfilled related to the staffing arrangements for provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Special measures: monitoring of Thomas Willingale School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on insert 29–30 May 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, staff, most of the members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, significant staff changes have taken place or are about to take place. The inclusion manager has resigned due to personal reasons. An appointment has been made for September 2012. In the meantime, the deputy headteacher has taken on this role, as she has experience of this position. Two teachers have been appointed to the Nursery to start from September this year as a job share. They will visit the school regularly after half term and work with the Nursery staff. A new phase leader has been appointed for Reception and will take up her post from September 2012 together with another new teacher for Reception who will be visiting the school regularly after half term. One teacher in Year 2 is absent due to long-term sickness. The school is covering this absence with supply staff; maintaining as much consistency of provision as possible. One new teacher has been appointed to Year 5 and another to Year 6. They are due to start in September.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Overall achievement has improved in Key Stage 1 and 2 since the last monitoring inspection due to improvement in the quality of teaching. There are no longer significant differences in the attainment of different groups. However, the school's data indicates that achievement remains variable across year groups due to changes in teacher and the amount of catch up pupils have to do because of the legacy of underachievement caused by previously inadequate teaching. For example, progress has not been as rapid in Year 2, where pupils have had a number of supply teachers, or in Year 6, where there have also been changes in teacher. Where pupils have consistent provision, progress is mostly good. There is no validated end of key stage data for Year 2 or Year 6. However, the school predicts that pupils are on track to achieve above government floor standards in Year 6 and that the number of higher Level 5 results has increased from last year in both English and mathematics. Leaders acknowledge that there is more to do regarding raising teachers' expectations for middle and higher achieving pupils. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because they are well integrated into appropriate learning groups in lessons and given support where this is required.

In the Nursery and Reception classes, there has been deterioration since the last monitoring inspection and, due to inadequate provision, children are no longer making expected progress. Experienced and qualified staff have been appointed to address this issue

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

- improve standards in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is much improved in Key Stage 1 and 2, although teaching in Nursery and Reception is inadequate. In the Nursery, this is because adults tend to remain with specific activities rather than moving around the provision listening to learning and intervening with an appropriate probing or open-ended question to move learning forward. For example, one child's exploration of bubbles in the water tray was completely missed. In Reception, learning is not structured to enable all pupils to achieve because whole-class sessions are not matched to children's different capabilities, and children become frustrated because the work is not appropriate for them. The school is aware of these issues and leaders have taken steps to address them.

The quality of teaching has improved sharply in Key Stages 1 and 2 since the last monitoring inspection. There was twice as much good teaching seen in lessons on this inspection visit and pupils' good progress is evidence that this has been consistent over the past few months. In the good lessons, pupils are encouraged to be independent learners by being set challenging and interesting problems to solve. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils were planning a Jubilee party, comparing supermarket prices online to get the best deals. Lessons are interactive because all pupils are expected to take an active part throughout. There is good collaborative work where pupils talk to a partner about how best to solve a problem and, when they are successful, answers are shared with the rest of the class and achievement celebrated. For example, in one lesson, pupils were constantly reminded about the purpose of their discussions and the teacher monitored their thinking very carefully, quickly spotting misconceptions or barriers to learning and addressing these rapidly. When teaching is less effective, this is because there is insufficient challenge for different ability groups, in particular more-able pupils, and teachers do not make the best use of resources. In particular, teaching assistants are inactive during whole-class teaching. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and that teachers continue to make learning interesting and fun. However, some say work can be too easy for them.

Teachers' understanding and use of assessment has improved and, in Key Stages 1 and 2, it is accurate and robust. Teachers have all received training on how to track pupils' progress and use this information to identify pupils who are not making enough progress. Written marking in pupils' books has improved but variations remain; it is better in English than in mathematics. Though they do not always have these in mathematics, pupils say that they now have clear steps in English that show them how to improve their work.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All pupils behave well in lessons, on the playground and around the school. They are courteous and polite, opening doors for each other and for adults. This is due to the high expectations adults have, and pupils respond to this. They say that the new behaviour traffic light and reward system has completely eradicated disruption in lessons and that they are more relaxed and can learn better. This is evident in all lessons observed during this inspection. Teachers are consistent in managing pupils' behaviour and ensure all are involved and included. Pupils say there is no bullying of any kind and when friends fall out this is quickly resolved, sometimes with the help of an adult. Safeguarding processes and procedures fully meet regulatory requirements.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher continues to lead the school with a determination for improvement in achievement. She has a clear and ambitious vision for the school which she is driving forward, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and supported by the phase and middle leaders. This is evident in the school's perceptive self-evaluation, including its accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and achievement. It is also evident in the teachers' positive attitudes to the professional development opportunities and support they have received, especially from the headteacher and teachers of the partnership school. The reports they have written about their visits to the school clearly identify the impact this has had on improving their practice. These improvements to teaching and learning were observed during the inspection.

Middle leaders are gaining confidence and have a much clearer understanding of their role and responsibilities. For example, phase leaders have monitored teaching in their year groups and have contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching as a result of this. The deputy headteacher continues to lead pupil progress meetings, which teachers say are more robust and enable them to focus on what interventions will help close the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Subject coordinators collect pupils' work to illustrate progress made from starting

points. The mathematics coordinator has recognised that there is insufficient emphasis in the curriculum in giving pupils opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in problem-solving activities.

The school development plan reflects the clarity of vision leaders and managers now have. Targets are precise, challenging and measurable, although the school is aware of the need to fine tune the achievement target to ensure it recognises the need to increase the number of pupils attaining Level 5 in English and mathematics. The governing body has greater clarity about its role in school improvement, and the new Chair is as determined as the headteacher to raise pupils' achievement. She has ensured that the governing body receives appropriate and often bespoke training so that it can challenge the school more effectively. All governors have specific responsibilities, including links to subjects and phases within the school. The community cohesion governor is beginning to review this aspect of provision.

The headteacher has moved as swiftly as possible to ensure that all statutory requirements are fulfilled related to the staffing arrangements for provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The recently appointed teachers are due to take up their posts in September.

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

- improve the quality of leadership and management – good
- ensure that all statutory requirements are fulfilled related to the staffing arrangements for provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school through the advice given by human resources regarding staffing issues and the education adviser who makes regular visits. The impact of his work is evident in middle leaders' confidence in and understanding of their roles in school improvement. The partnership headteacher gives robust support and challenge to the headteacher and has assisted school improvement.