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Mr Grant Krog
Head of School
The Leys Primary School
Leys Avenue
Dagenham
Essex
RM10 9YR

Dear Mr Krog

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Leys Primary School

Following my visit with Olson Davis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 July 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 March 2012. 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 – good

Newly qualified teachers may not 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 Barking and Dagenham.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2012

- Raise achievement in English and mathematics so that pupils leave the school with at least average attainment, by ensuring a greater and more consistent level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able.

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby pupils' learning by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving in all subject areas
 - improving the use of assessment, including marking and the use of pupils' targets, so that pupils have a clear idea of how they can improve their work
 - consistent and effective deployment of support staff to assist teachers in ensuring that all pupils, particularly those at risk of underachieving, make at least expected progress.

- Build on existing developments in leadership and management to secure the school's capacity to improve at a rapid pace through:
 - systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching and pupils' achievement by all leaders and managers
 - frequent assessment of pupils' achievements that is linked with teachers' planning and expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - the governing body holding school leaders to account for pupils' performance.

Special measures: monitoring of The Leys Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 July 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the head of school, senior leaders, four members of the governing body, the mathematics subject leader and the local authority link adviser. Inspectors talked with pupils, listened to them reading and looked at their work. Teaching in Years 1–6 was seen and 11 of the lesson observations were conducted jointly with the head of school and deputy headteacher. Behaviour and safety were judged to be good at the last section 5 inspection so did not form part of this monitoring inspection.

Context

There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection. The interim headteacher left at the end of May due to ill health and the deputy headteacher was appointed head of school. The temporary deputy headteacher has been made permanent. The inclusion manager has joined the senior leadership team as assistant headteacher. One middle leader is on special leave and four staff have resigned, from the end of term. All four posts have been filled for September. A parental support adviser has been recruited. Two additional governors have joined the governing body. There is one new parent governor and one parent governor vacancy. Plans to federate with another local primary school are advanced. The headteacher of Beam Primary School will be the executive headteacher of the federation from September.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement has improved and the attainment gap between pupils in the school and all pupils nationally is closing. More pupils have attained the levels expected for their age in English and mathematics assessments at the end of each key stage this year. Targets have been met or exceeded and more pupils have attained the higher Level 5 in mathematics and English at the end of Year 6 than in previous years. This is because expectations have been raised and the progress that pupils make has been accelerated. The school's detailed assessment and tracking information shows that a greater proportion of pupils make the progress expected. However, senior leaders are aware that inconsistencies in pupils' attainment and rates of progress remain in different classes and that pupils' progress in writing is not as good as in mathematics and reading.

Pupils recognise that their learning and progress have improved because more is expected of them and the work they have completed has increased. Examples seen in their English and mathematics books and in lessons observed confirm this. In a

Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils made good progress because the teacher was explicit about what was expected, reminding one pupil to avoid previous mistakes by saying, 'Remember – none of that Level 2 work using "then, and then, and then." ' However, the level of challenge for different groups of pupils across the school, including the more able, is still variable. For example, in some mathematics books seen and lessons observed, pupils who had understood a concept and completed calculations correctly were not moved on to their next learning step quickly but given more of the same task. This slowed their progress so they made satisfactory rather than good learning gains. Although expectations have been raised, there are some missed opportunities to raise aspirations and challenge the most able to aim as high as possible. For example, no pupils were entered for the highest Level 6 mathematics assessment at the end of Year 6. The legacy of underachievement is being tackled effectively by improving the quality of teaching, focused support and carefully targeted intervention programmes but gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding remain, particularly in Year 5. The senior leaders have been successful in securing additional resources from September to address this.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Raise achievement in English and mathematics so that pupils leave the school with at least average attainment, by ensuring a greater and more consistent level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able – good.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved and a greater proportion of lessons are now good. This has a positive impact on accelerating pupils' learning and progress. Just over half the lessons observed during the inspection were good and none was inadequate. The school's own detailed lesson observation records show that after an initial rapid increase in the proportion of good teaching, the rate of improvement has steadied as teachers' improved skills become more embedded in everyday practice. Good teaching is not well established across all year groups and subjects. Expectations of what pupils should achieve have been raised through regular meetings to discuss their progress, detailed feedback by senior leaders on the quality of teaching and learning they have observed, and carefully tailored professional development. Teachers are more aware of the need to use assessment information to plan different activities for pupils of varied abilities. This is now a consistent feature of lessons but the quality of these tasks is variable. Pupils made good progress in lessons when activities built carefully on their prior learning and a clear understanding of their next steps. However, in some lessons seen, such as a Year 6 guided reading session, the tasks were too easy for the more able pupils and did not extend their understanding or challenge their thinking. In a mathematics lesson, a problem solving activity required less able pupils to read text which was

too difficult. This slowed their pace of learning and hindered their mathematical understanding.

Good use is made of practical resources to engage pupils in lessons. The learning objective and three varied success criteria for different ability groups of pupils are consistently shared at the start of lessons. Pupils are regularly given good opportunities to talk with a partner to share their ideas and rehearse their responses to questions. In the most effective lessons, teachers constantly monitored the learning of all pupils to maintain a brisk pace, moving them on or offering further explanation and support as needed. Skilful questioning challenged pupils to explain their ideas, deepened their understanding, and identified and corrected any misconceptions quickly. However, this was not seen in all lessons.

Pupils know their targets for reading, writing and mathematics. Although these are referred to in some lessons and were seen being used effectively in a Year 6 literacy lesson, they are not updated regularly or used consistently well to move learning on rapidly in all classes. The quality of marking has improved, although it is better in English than mathematics. Where it is most effective, teachers provide pupils with clear guidance on what they have done well and what they could do better. However, some books, such as guided reading, are not marked regularly and developmental comments which extend pupils' understanding in mathematics are limited.

The regular review of pupils' progress has ensured that teachers have a clear understanding of those in their class who are at risk of underachieving. Additional support and the use of well-targeted intervention programmes help these pupils to catch up. Teaching assistants are now used well to develop pupils' mathematics skills by leading 15-minute activities that take place across the school at the start of each day. They are increasingly effective at supporting pupils in group activities in lessons but a few fail to correct errors pupils make with spelling, punctuation and letter and number formation. In the most effective lessons, teachers are alert to how well support staff are engaging with pupils in whole-class activities and they direct them to do more when needed.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby pupils' learning – good

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Systematic assessment and pupil-tracking information is analysed in detail by the head of school and deputy headteacher. Consequently, they have an accurate understanding of the progress that has been made since the last inspection and what more needs to be done. They have been sharply focused on the key priorities

of raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The plan for improvement is clear and manageable and includes measurable targets but lacks quantifiable milestones against which they, and the governing body, can evaluate the pace of improvement, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching. Accurate, regular monitoring of lessons is used well to identify strengths in teaching and areas for development. This information is directly linked to an explicit programme of professional development and support for individual staff. It contributes well to raising expectations and equipping staff with the skills needed to ensure all pupils achieve well. Senior leaders understand the need to build the school's capacity at all levels of leadership. The role of middle leaders and the assistant headteacher in improvement is at the early stages of development and not sufficiently well established to demonstrate their impact on accelerating pupils' progress and improving teaching and learning. Assessment information is used increasingly to inform teachers' planning but senior leaders are aware that the quality of planning and its delivery in lessons is variable. This is because teachers' understanding of what pupils already know and precisely what they need to learn next is not embedded throughout the school.

The governing body has been strengthened by the addition of two experienced governors with relevant expertise and a good understanding of school improvement. A monitoring board has been established, which includes governors from the federated school, to oversee the progress being made in addressing the issues identified at the last inspection. However, this board has not met or established its terms of reference. The development of the governing body's skills to support, challenge and hold leaders to account has been limited.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Build on existing developments in leadership and management to secure the school's capacity to improve at a rapid pace—satisfactory

External support

The local authority statement of action is deemed fit for purpose. The external support provided by the local authority link adviser, the federated school and a National Support School has been sharply focused on the areas for improvement. It has had a positive impact on the good progress made by the school in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. Senior leaders have conducted joint monitoring with the link adviser to ensure that their own judgments of teaching are accurate and they have raised expectations by providing staff with opportunities to see models of good practice in other schools.