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Megan Jenkins
Headteacher
Riverside Primary School
Ferry Road
Hullbridge
Hockley
SS5 6ND

Dear Miss Jenkins

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Riverside Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26–27 September 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 November 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.

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

David Jones
Her Majesty’s Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that compliance with the school's safeguarding policies is monitored carefully.

- By October 2012 build the school's capacity to improve by:
 - improving the school's long-term strategic vision, including that for the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that the school's priorities are widely shared and all staff are held to account for pupils' outcomes
 - involving leaders and managers at all levels, and the governing body, in drawing up a sharply focused short-term development plan, linked to measurable outcomes in pupils' achievement and with clear lines of accountability
 - ensuring all staff and members of the governing body are clear about what needs to be done to secure rapid improvement
 - implementing a cycle of rigorous self-evaluation to provide clear information about the school's successes and areas for improvement
 - enabling members of the governing body to participate more fully in supporting and challenging the school.

- By October 2012 enhance the rate of pupils' progress and raise attainment, especially in English and mathematics by:
 - providing motivating curriculum experiences that give pupils a clear sense of purpose and enjoyment for writing
 - using extended writing to accurately apply the technical skills of spelling, grammar and the development of a fluent joined script
 - giving clear guidance to staff about the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils should acquire across the curriculum, but especially in English and mathematics as they move through the school
 - reviewing the current arrangements for withdrawing pupils from lessons so they spend more time learning with their class.

- By October 2012 raise the quality of teaching throughout the school by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can do, and providing more challenging work
 - ensuring pupils are always clear about what they are expected to learn
 - using assessment information frequently to plan and adapt work so that it consistently meets the needs of pupils of differing abilities
 - giving clear feedback in lessons and when marking pupils' work so that they are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

- By October 2012 improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - raising the knowledge and understanding of staff of the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework
 - improving the provision for learning, both indoors and outdoors

- providing a wide range of engaging learning activities that help children acquire a firm foundation for literacy skills
 - presenting challenging play activities that enable children to count and solve problems
 - offering greater opportunities for children to use their initiative and make decisions for themselves
 - using assessment more effectively to plan children’s learning.
- Ensure that pupils develop a better understanding of the lifestyles, cultures and religions that represent the diversity of society in the United Kingdom.

Special measures: monitoring of Riverside Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 26–27 September 2012

Evidence

HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, the quality of the pupils' work, and the minutes of the governing body meetings. The inspector met with the headteacher, nominated staff, the headteacher of one of the support schools, a wide range of pupils and parents, and the Chair of the Governing Body.

HMI found time to speak with a number of parents as they brought their children to school on the second day of the inspection; all were very positive about the school and the safety of their children, and many commented on their children's keenness to come to school each day. The inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority. HMI observed all staff teach and provided professional feedback.

Context

The deputy headteacher has returned to her post following a leave of absence and the literacy coordinator has been appointed to the senior leadership team and as assistant headteacher as a one year temporary post. A teacher from the main school has taken up the role of Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator, following the resignation of her predecessor, who was also assistant headteacher. Riverside Primary is being supported by two successful local schools whose headteachers are both Local Leaders of Education.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The results of the 2012 Key Stage 1 unvalidated teacher assessments indicate improvement in all areas of learning. Attainment is likely to be broadly in-line with the national average. Outcomes in reading and mathematics were stronger than in writing. Similarly, the results of the 2012 Key Stage 2 national tests for pupils in Year 6 are also likely to be broadly in line with the local authority and national averages. As in Key Stage 1 the pupils' performance in writing remains weaker than in reading and mathematics.

The 2012 Key Stage 2 results are likely to be above the government's floor targets. However, the progress made by the outgoing Year 6 pupils between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics will remain close to the national median. In 2011-12, pupils in Years 1, 3 and 5 made inconsistent progress, most often in writing. Similar variations were found in the progress made by those eligible for free school meals and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

The pupils who have recently arrived in the Early Years Foundation Stage class are making good progress as a result of the effective routines and the good teaching now available. The 2011 and 2012 Early Years Foundation Stage data provided a relatively positive picture that belied the weakness in provision seen during the previous inspection and the first monitoring visit; Year 1 pupils' progress points to inconsistencies in the early development of reading and writing skills. HMI noted that the pupils who have recently made the transition into Year 1 have an inconsistent grasp of phonics and simple decoding skills, often relying on word recognition and guesswork.

The school needs to establish a secure baseline for the pupils' literacy skills in all year groups so they can present accurate data on current pupils' progress at the next monitoring visit.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- By October 2012 enhance the rate of pupils' progress and raise attainment, especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory
- By October 2012 improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage – good

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous monitoring visit. HMI saw eleven lessons and found teaching to be good or better on seven occasions. No inadequate teaching was observed.

In the one outstanding English lesson, the pupils made rapid progress during a series of punctuation tasks related to the representation of speech. They grew in confidence and accuracy because they were given time for brief discussions with their talk partners and because careful questioning reshaped explanations and tasks.

Similarly, good teaching provided effective feedback on what had been achieved, and made clear the teacher's high expectations through careful questioning that drove learning forward.

In those lessons that required improvement, the pace of learning was not sufficiently brisk and pupils failed to make good progress because classroom management required more effective direction.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- By October 2012 raise the quality of teaching throughout the school – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The pupils' attitudes to learning are a significant positive feature in all year groups. Behaviour in lessons was good where tasks were engaging and time was well managed. Some pupils took the opportunities presented for social chatter when the pace of the lesson required improvement. Attendance remains above the national average.

The pupils are courteous with their peers and listen with respect when they are talking. During break and lunchtimes behaviour is good and pupils comment on the absence of bullying and the fact that 'people are friendly'. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that compliance with the school's safeguarding policies is monitored carefully – good

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The senior leadership team is notably stronger since the return of the deputy headteacher and the inclusion of the new assistant headteacher. The team has a clear view of what needs to be done and how to effect change. The monitoring of teaching is robust. Senior leaders were invited to join HMI in the evaluation of nine of the eleven lessons observed. The views they expressed concurred with the judgements given by the inspector; other staff will be invited to join this exercise at the next monitoring visit.

School improvement planning has begun to take effect with changes made in the Early Years Foundation Stage that have been well supported by the infant specialists in one of the partner school. Governance has become more effective at holding the school to account and good procedures regarding safeguarding and governor confidentiality have been applied effectively.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Ensure that pupils develop a better understanding of the lifestyles, cultures and religions that represent the diversity of society in the United Kingdom – satisfactory
- By October 2012 build the school's capacity to improve – good

As part of the first monitoring visit HMI identified an additional priority, important to the school's further improvement:

- As a matter of urgency, secure improvement in the leadership and teaching provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage – good progress

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support. The extension to the Support Schools Programme has been rapidly agreed and good support from the local authority was available for the Chair of Governors on a concern related to governance.

The excellent decision made to second an experienced local authority adviser to the school on a part-time basis has enabled the changes, made to the senior leadership team, to take effect quickly and has provided very useful evaluations of pupils' progress. The local authority negotiated a change in the support available to the school following the previous monitoring visit. Two new schools, whose headteachers are both Local Leaders of Education, took over this work and brought valuable expertise to the development process. This has been important to the changes effected in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the quality of teaching. Riverside's senior team have found this to be an effective aid to their school improvement programme.