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17 January 2013

Ms Leigh Culyer and Mr Grant Krog
Executive Headteacher and Head of School
The Leys Primary School
Leys Avenue
Dagenham
Essex
RM10 9YR

Dear Ms Culyer and Mr Krog,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Leys Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15–16 January 2013, 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 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

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 second monitoring inspection on 15–16 January 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, three members of the governing body, the English and mathematics subject leaders and the local authority link adviser. Teaching in Years 1–6 was seen in 10 lessons, all of which were observed with the school's senior leaders. Pupils' work was looked at in lessons and inspectors saw a sample of English and mathematics books from pupils in Years 2 and 3. Behaviour and safety were judged to be good at the last section 5 inspection so did not form part of this monitoring inspection.

Context

The soft federation is now fully operational under the leadership of the executive headteacher, who is also the headteacher of Beam Primary School. Four teachers have left since the last monitoring inspection. Six new teachers have joined since September, one of whom is on a secondment from the federated school. One teacher has been appointed using pupil premium funding to provide additional support for pupils in Year 6 and another is covering a maternity leave. Two teaching assistants, an attendance officer and a parent support adviser have also joined the school. There is now a full complement of governors.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards are rising but remain below average, particularly at the end of Key Stage 1, where they are not improving as rapidly as by the end of Year 6. Daily 15-minute sessions for all pupils to develop their basic English and mathematical skills, as well as information for parents and carers about what they can do at home to help, are contributing to closing gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school has had success in raising achievement for pupils in Year 6 in the 2012 national tests. Senior leaders and members of the governing body acknowledge that to sustain these improvements standards in Key Stage 1 need to rise, especially in reading, so that pupils have the skills they need when they move into Key Stage 2 and are less reliant on additional support programmes to achieve as well as they should.

The school's own detailed records show that, although increasing numbers of pupils are making faster progress and reaching standards that are closer to those expected for their age, achievement is still too variable between different classes, year groups

and subjects. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain and these were seen during the monitoring inspection in the lessons observed and pupils' books. Pupils made good progress in a Year 5 mathematics lesson on fractions because they were given work at the right level for their different abilities and were challenged to progress further in logical, increasingly complex steps when they were ready. Pupils achieved less well and their progress was limited, particularly the more able, in lessons that did not build on what they could already do and move them on to the next learning goal.

Senior leaders share information and have regular discussions with each teacher and phase leaders about the achievement of their pupils. They all know which pupils need to do better. Additional support programmes are put in place to help these pupils catch up and, as a result, some, but not all, are making rapid gains in their learning. Leaders are yet to evaluate in depth which support programmes are most successful so that they can build on what works well and discontinue or modify any that are less effective.

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

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

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is still variable and good teaching not embedded well enough across the school to ensure that lessons are always of a high quality. During this monitoring inspection, just under half of the lessons observed were good and some were inadequate. This is less strong than during the previous monitoring inspection. The school's own records indicate that the teaching observed by school leaders has improved and that targets for the proportion of good or better lessons in the action plan have been exceeded. The quality of teaching is monitored systematically, including through regular teaching and learning reviews supported by the local authority link adviser who moderates the school's judgements. Joint observations during the monitoring inspection confirm that senior leaders are accurate in their identification of strengths and weaknesses in lessons. When they observe lessons that are less than good, they give support and guidance to the teacher and revisit the teacher's lessons to assess whether there has been any improvement. For some teachers, this has made a difference to their practice, but not all.

Teachers' planning regularly includes common features such as varied activities and success criteria for pupils of different abilities. In the best lessons seen, teachers monitored closely how well all pupils were learning throughout the lesson. They adjusted what they had planned to do, intervening when pupils found the work too

difficult or easy. They used probing questions to test pupils' understanding and encouraged them to develop and explain their ideas. As a result, the pupils were engaged, stayed focused and achieved well. In one lesson, a pupil was enlightened by an explanation of work on fractions given by another pupil, saying, 'Now I understand it because she explained it so well.' Not all teachers are skilful enough at assessing how well pupils are learning in a lesson but are rather more focused on delivering the lesson that they have planned. As a result, misconceptions are not always spotted and corrected, and the pace of learning is too slow. This is because pupils are either rushed onto the next activity before they are ready or they are expected to complete more of the same tasks that they can already do competently.

Pupils know their targets for improvement which are recorded in their books, displayed on desks and in classrooms. These are referred to in the best lessons and help pupils to achieve well. A clear marking policy has been implemented since September. Marking comments in pupils' books include next steps but the quality of teachers' marking to help pupils improve is variable and generally better in English and mathematics. In the best examples, the next steps are closely linked to the learning objective of the lesson. Where marking is less helpful, comments are vague, and relate to presentation or effort without giving precise next steps which will progress the pupil to a higher level of understanding. Some poor marking seen had spelling errors and did not demonstrate good punctuation, grammar or handwriting.

Teaching assistants are being used more effectively in lessons to support pupils in whole-class activities as well as when working in groups. Some teaching assistants are now asking good questions to encourage pupils to think for themselves but a few are not taking every opportunity to make sure pupils are always forming their letters and numbers correctly.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leadership and management responsibilities have been distributed more widely since September to build the school's capacity for sustained improvement. The senior leadership team has been extended to involve the inclusion manager, who has been made the assistant headteacher. The role is still relatively new but has been defined well through a clear job description and includes line management responsibility for the teaching assistants. Relevant training and support are being provided by the more experienced senior leaders, the federated school and the local authority to help develop the necessary leadership skills and increase the impact of those with new leadership roles on improving pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching.

The monitoring of teaching and learning has been extended to include the English and mathematics subject leaders and phase leaders. They have dedicated time each week to undertake specific monitoring activities, including reviewing teachers' planning and pupils' books. They have a checklist to guide them and they report back to senior leaders regularly, but they are relatively new to their roles and their analytical skills are not yet sharply honed on evaluating the quality of learning. They have helped to improve the teaching of some colleagues, through demonstration lessons and team teaching, but this has not been extensive enough to improve the quality of teaching overall more rapidly.

Key governors on the monitoring board are helping to promote more effective governance. They meet frequently and use the information they are given about the school's performance to ask challenging questions of senior leaders and hold them to account for the progress that the school is making in addressing the issues identified at the last inspection. They seek further explanation and clarification when needed. This is helping to develop these important skills in other governors. The monitoring board understands that some inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.

The clear guidance and support given to staff and parents and carers by senior leaders have been instrumental in raising expectations but this has not yet secured enough good teaching.

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

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

External support

Good support from the federated school, the local authority link adviser and advisory teachers are increasing the leadership skills of the assistant headteacher, subject and phase leaders. They have also improved the effectiveness of the school's governance through training and sharing best practice. The impact of external support on embedding consistently good teaching and learning across the whole school has been less successful.