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Mrs Diane Ashmore
Headteacher
Westfield Community Primary School
Westfield Road
Hoddesdon
EN11 8RA

Dear Mrs Ashmore

Special measures monitoring inspection of Westfield Community Primary School

Following my visit with Sandra Teacher, Additional Inspector, to your school on 30–31 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Hertfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels accelerate school improvement by:
 - regularly and rigorously monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' outcomes, and using the results to improve pupils' achievement
 - improving pupils' social and moral development consistently across the curriculum and eliminating the elements of unacceptable behaviour.

- Improve achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that assessment information is used sharply to identify underachievement, especially in Key Stage 2, and providing effective support to accelerate pupils' progress
 - ensuring pupils' reading books are well matched to their reading ability in order to improve their reading skills.

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is good or better across the school by:
 - ensuring all lessons provide tasks that are closely matched to pupils' ability to improve the progress they make
 - setting clear targets that are regularly referred to in lessons and discussed and reviewed frequently with pupils, so they understand exactly what they need to do to reach the next stage in their learning.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 30–31 January 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of pupils, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and a National Leader in Education (NLE). Inspectors spoke with several parents and carers as they dropped off their children in the morning.

Context

One member of staff is away from school. One teacher has moved classes and one class is being taught by a temporary teacher. The school has a new literacy leader, who was previously responsible for reading. The Chair of the Governing Body is new to the post.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement is improving. Many pupils are making better progress than they were in the past. Assessment information is being used more effectively to show where underachievement exists. Teachers and leaders regularly discuss reasons why some pupils make less than expected progress, and plan strategies to help these pupils catch up. In most classes, this additional support and the improvements in teaching work well. However, in a few classes further improvements are needed. In some cases, the standard of pupils' work is not as high as the school believes. Some teaching assistants are not giving pupils enough support and guidance. This is either because they are not given appropriate guidance on how to support individuals or groups, or because they are not following it. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not plan activities that are demanding enough for the most able pupils, or provide enough support for the least able.

Leaders now have a more secure view of what data are telling them about the progress made by different groups of pupils, and can show how they have provided additional support to help these pupils catch up. There remains some underachievement. Most urgently, the pupils in Year 6 have a significant amount of work to do to catch up and reach the above-average levels of attainment they are capable of, particularly in mathematics. To this end, an additional teacher has worked with the effective Year 6 teacher to supporting learning in mathematics in Year 6. This has led to many pupils in this class making accelerated progress. Pupils who need to catch up further have been identified, and further support provided.

Pupils are reading more readily. They have regular opportunities to read. Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are using their knowledge of

phonics (the sounds that letters make) to work out unfamiliar words more successfully. This is because phonics are being taught more consistently. Reading has a higher profile in the school. Books are better organised in most classes so pupils can find suitably challenging reading material. Pupils enjoy reading and reading records show that many are reading regularly at home.

Writing skills are being taught more effectively and pupils are becoming more competent writers. However, some work is let down by weak presentation and teachers are not always quick enough to point out careless mistakes or insist on high standards of presentation, basic grammar and handwriting. Appropriate work is increasingly provided for pupils of different abilities in English and mathematics. However, the same is not always true in other subjects. This means that some opportunities are missed to develop literacy and numeracy skills through subjects like history and science.

The quality of teaching

While teaching is improving, it requires further improvement because too many lessons are still not good. Some teachers have improved their skills considerably and there is a marked difference in the quality of teaching in some classes. In these classes, teachers have benefited from additional training and support provided by the local authority through consultants and the opportunity to work with outstanding practitioners from other schools. In some classes, improvements are still fragile and too many pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. This is because the work planned is often at the wrong level for some groups of pupils.

In the best lessons seen, teachers have an in-depth understanding of the different needs of different pupils. They use this knowledge effectively to plan activities and ask questions that challenge pupils to think deeply. In these lessons, pupils learn quickly and are beginning to catch up on past underachievement.

The targets teachers set for pupils are increasingly good at reminding pupils about the things they need to do to improve their work. In some classes, not enough is done to improve the presentation of work and so some pupils make simple mistakes in their work through lack of care rather than lack of knowledge. It is important that all teachers set high expectations of presentation, handwriting and the consistent use of simple grammar.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is almost always very good in class and on the playground. The issues identified around behaviour and safety at the last inspection have been resolved. Pupils work hard to meet high expectations of behaviour, and as a result the school is calm and orderly.

The school effectively supports pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Staff with pastoral responsibilities work well with teachers and parents to ensure pupils are supported through difficult times. While some parents still express residual concerns, almost all are very positive about the support, care and guidance provided for their children.

Playtimes are much improved. Playgrounds are zoned so pupils have different spaces to play different types of games. Relationships between staff and pupils are more consistently positive so pupils feel supported and safe in school. Inspectors have no further concerns about behaviour and safety, but will ensure these improvements have been maintained at the next visit.

Inspectors have been assured by the local authority that the special resource base in the school will not be used as a base for pupils from other schools in the future. This resource will be an outreach service or situated elsewhere.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders are taking appropriate action to move the school forward. Difficult decisions have been taken. There is a determination to improve rapidly. As a result, the quality of education is improving. Pupils are enjoying school more and achievement is rising. Leaders are clear about the next steps needed to improve the school further. They willingly work with the local authority and leaders from a local outstanding school. Senior leaders are working more independently as time goes on, and becoming less reliant on external support.

Middle leadership is developing. Literacy is now led by one person, and this works well in ensuring that decisions about improvements are coordinated. The numeracy leader has been leading weekly planning sessions for teachers, to ensure that planning is appropriate and takes account of previous learning. Leaders are making better use of data to make decisions about their future plans and to ensure pupils who have fallen behind catch up quickly. Leaders regularly observe teaching in lessons and look at work in books. These activities have been completed alongside local authority advisers and the NLE. However, they have not been used to check the accuracy of the data collected about pupils' achievement. As a result, the staff have not seen that some of the data are inaccurate, and some underachievement has gone unnoticed.

Work to reorganise the curriculum has been successful. Pupils enjoy their lessons and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for. Leaders have tackled the issues identified relating to pupils' attitudes, so behaviour and safety are now good.

The governing body has been restructured following a local authority review. The new Chair of the Governing Body is leading these developments effectively.

Governors are clear about their responsibilities and are becoming much more involved in monitoring the work of the school and holding leaders to account. Performance management procedures are being used to make clear the priorities for further development.

External support

The local authority has provided a good degree of support and arranged further support from a local outstanding school, led by the NLE. This support has been sharply focused on making rapid improvements in the most critical areas while developing leadership capacity so that improvements are sustainable.

The support has included opportunities to observe good practice in other schools, help from local authority consultants to improve weaker teaching, opportunities for leaders to work alongside highly effective leaders, and a review and restructuring of the governing body.

The local authority and the school's leaders are well aware of the remaining issues that need to be resolved before the school is ready to be removed from special measures, and to be in a reasonable position for further improvement without external support.