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14 February 2013

Bozena Laraway  
Executive Headteacher  
Cherry Tree Primary School, Basildon  
Church Road  
Basildon  
SS16 4AG

Dear Mrs Laraway

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Cherry Tree Primary School, Basildon**

Following my visit with Sherry Gladwin, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12–13 February 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 19 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. Additional newly qualified teachers should 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 Essex.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by:
  - introducing a rigorous programme to develop the subject knowledge and expertise of staff in teaching mathematics and monitoring its impact
  - planning opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills effectively across all subjects
  - consistently challenging the more able pupils so that they achieve to the best of their ability
  - providing more helpful comments to pupils through the marking of their work on the steps they need to take to meet their targets.
- Improve the teaching of phonics and accelerate the development of pupils' early reading skills by:
  - ensuring that phonics tasks and materials are well-matched to pupils' skills and capabilities
  - ensuring that each lesson focuses more sharply on the next stages in learning for all pupils.
- Improve behaviour in lessons and around the school by:
  - involving staff, pupils, the governing body, parents and carers in reviewing the behaviour policy so there is a shared and common understanding of principles and procedures
  - setting clear and consistent expectations in classrooms for pupils' behaviour
  - providing training and guidance for all staff in the implementation of procedures for behaviour management.
- Build the school's leadership capacity and impact by:
  - sharpening the accuracy of school self-evaluation
  - ensuring that planning to tackle key priorities is based on challenging targets for improving the pupils' achievement
  - developing the role played by the governing body in holding the school to account.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 February 2013**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, including joint lesson observations with the executive headteacher, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, groups of pupils, leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, teachers, the external induction tutor for newly qualified teachers and a representative from the local authority.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, the English subject leader has left and the Key Stage 2 leader has taken on the additional responsibility of leading English.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

In most lessons observed by inspectors, the rate of learning was good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers have continued to develop a clear understanding of how the achievement of their pupils compares with national expectations. Pupils are making strong progress in English, where systematic phonics is now taught well. Pupils in Year 5 can analyse sentences, confidently using the vocabulary of subordinate clauses. In mathematics, improvements have been slower. Building blocks in pupils' mathematics learning are still not secure.

### **The quality of teaching**

Lessons are usually conducted at a brisk pace with interesting activities for pupils. Teachers ensure that pupils are involved in discussions. There is often a good mix between ensuring that a wide range of pupils are involved in questioning and targeting appropriate questions to chosen pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge, especially in English, which adds confidence to their teaching. A lot of teaching assistants are employed who support lower attaining pupils. Sometimes, this leads to these pupils having insufficient direct contact with the class teacher. Where lessons are not yet good, planning tends to focus on the activity rather than what the teacher wants the pupils to learn as a result of the lesson. In the best lessons, the work is matched well to the different abilities in the classroom but there remains some inconsistency in how effectively teachers do this. Teachers are using an increasing range of ways of checking how well pupils are doing during the lesson, such as the use of mini-whiteboards to show teachers what pupils have written, but again some teachers do this more effectively than others.

The marking of books is regular and comments tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work. There is less evidence of teachers checking that pupils have followed up on what they are asked to do in the teachers' comments.

There has been an effective programme of teacher training and development. This has included opportunities to visit other schools to see outstanding practice. Newly qualified teachers are receiving a well-structured programme of guidance and support which is enabling them to incorporate new ideas into their lessons. They grow in confidence from the regular feedback they receive.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour seen around the school continues to be calm and courteous. Classroom management by teachers is very effective. The most striking thing is that pupils are very much focussed on their work. Classrooms are industrious places where pupils clearly enjoy their learning. They listen to teachers with rapt attention and are eager to volunteer answers. Pupils enter and exit assemblies quietly, and assemblies now play a positive role involving teachers in a whole school responsibility and helping to raise pupils' aspirations.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Some areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report have been resolved very well and the school is transformed from that described in the last inspection report. For example, behaviour is now a strength rather than a concern, the teaching of systematic phonics has greatly improved, as has the overall quality of teaching. Pupils are very positive about changes in the school and speak enthusiastically about the way that learning is being brought alive through activities and trips such as the recent one to London.

Current leadership arrangements are effective in driving improvement but were put in place as an emergency measure on 1 September. The post of headteacher has now been advertised with a view to making an appointment in September 2013. In the meantime, it is imperative that transitional arrangements for the summer term enable the school's improvement to continue without a loss of momentum. Currently, the arrangement of an executive headteacher providing on-site leadership for three days a week and one deputy headteacher in the school is working but, as the executive headteacher's time allocation in this school declines, it is essential that senior leadership in the school is strengthened while avoiding any temporary changes in strategic direction. This is especially important as the school changes from a local authority school to a sponsored academy. The local authority, governing body and executive headteacher are working together to resolve this.

The relatively new Chair of the Governing Body has been working closely with a national leader of governance who is an experienced governing body chair. Governors continue to receive training and new governors have been recruited. The governing body is much better informed regarding both its responsibilities and the school's strengths and challenges. As a result of the improved capacity of the governing body, the local authority has returned full powers of governance to it.

Governors are aware that one of their duties in which they were failing in the past was to be accountable for the effective use of the pupil premium funds. The large number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has resulted in the school receiving substantial extra funding through the pupil premium. The school is clearer about how this money has been used but is not yet in a position to evaluate its impact. Similarly, governors are aware of the need to accelerate the performance management process for teachers.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to monitor the progress of the school and arranges visits by a variety of consultants. These visits are welcomed by the school, although sometimes the focus of a consultant's visit is not always well matched to the school's most immediate priorities. The executive headteacher has used the other school she leads as a valuable resource, with all teachers visiting her school to see strong and effective practice. Newly qualified teachers continue to benefit from an external induction mentor who enables them to see practice in other schools, which is very beneficial.