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Mrs S Cross
Headteacher
Langer Primary Academy
Langer Road
Felixstowe
IP11 2HL

Dear Mrs Cross

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Langer Primary Academy

Following my visit with Ken Parry, Additional Inspector, to your academy on 20–21 March 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 a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher of the academy, senior leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, and a representative from the academy trust and members of the board of governors. Inspectors observed seven lessons and several parts of lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and reviewed a range of documentation related to self-evaluation and improvement.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

Context

Langer Primary Academy is smaller than average of its type, with 152 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language, although this number is increasing. The proportion of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or supported by school action plus is above that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the year is above average.

The school became an academy near the end of the previous academic year as part of the Academies Enterprise Trust. The school has difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff. There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection, with several changes to the post of headteacher. A new permanent headteacher will start at the beginning of the next term. Several vacancies remain on the governing board.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

Overall achievement continues to improve but still requires improvement because of remaining inconsistencies in teaching and learning. However, the improved levels of performance in English and mathematics seen when the school became an academy during the 2012 academic year remain. Achievement is best at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 as a result of some good teaching. The effective teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills in the Reception class ensures that these children make good progress from very low starting points before they join Year 1. Weaker teaching in other classes means that progress for pupils is not consistently good across the school.

Outcomes for English are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2. However, overall achievement in English still requires improvement. This is especially so in writing, due to a legacy of underachievement caused by previously inadequate teaching. As a result, inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and handwriting remain, and these hamper the ability of pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 to write well. However, some good teaching and enrichment of the curriculum through Shakespeare workshops and small-group discussions provide these pupils with good opportunities to use increasingly more complex vocabulary in lessons. Such activities are leading to greater levels of pupil engagement in literacy and opportunities to be creative in their writing. For instance, one more-able pupil in Year 6 wrote extended sentences that included a rich use of vocabulary as part of her poem about the life of a river, 'Silently, softly, slinking, rambling through the countryside like a determined walker, she meanders her way to her unknown destination.'

Achievement in mathematics is much better than in English. Some good teaching at the end of Key Stage 2, and effective training and support from professionals working on behalf of the academy trust, have led to a sustained trend of improvement in mathematics to levels slightly better than the national average. A further review of pupils' work during the inspection confirms that a third of the pupils in Year 6 are expected to attain Level 5 in the national tests this year. This closely matches the school's own predictions.

Achievement in phonics (the sounds children need to know in order to read successfully) is improving for those children in the Reception class and pupils in Years 1 and 2. However, gaps in phonic knowledge for younger pupils in Key Stage 2 are not filled quickly enough. Consequently, achievement in reading is not consistently good for all pupils in this key stage and still requires improvement.

The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is inconsistent and requires improvement. There are some good examples of carefully targeted support using the pupil premium (government funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) having a positive impact on the progress these pupils make in English and mathematics. However, the achievement of these pupils is too dependent on the quality of teaching in each class. Those pupils new to the school who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language make good and sometimes rapid progress because of carefully planned activities in individual sessions and good support in class from teaching assistants.

Inspection evidence and scrutiny of displays in the classrooms and around the school confirm that pupils are making good progress in subjects such as art; as exemplified by the high-quality three-dimensional human sculptures, Aztec masks and pictures of local beach scenes in Seurat's pointillist style.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve but still requires improvement. This is a view shared by the school through its own accurate self-evaluation. However, the balance between lessons judged to be good and those requiring improvement is shifting towards mostly good overall with some outstanding practice emerging within the school. For instance, there are examples of good practice in Reception, Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2, where teaching is consistently good with some outstanding features beginning to emerge in these classes. No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection. Those teachers identified as needing to improve attend further guidance and support at training sessions organised by the academy sponsor. They say that these courses have been informative and have helped them to improve their practice.

All teachers share learning intentions with pupils at the start of lessons to ensure that they now what is expected of them. In the best lessons, teachers make good reference to these learning intentions to set targets for pupils and maintain good

pace to their teaching. In the vast majority of lessons observed teachers used consistent strategies for managing pupils' behaviour which were successful at building positive relationships. Teachers provide some good opportunities for pupils to talk about what they are learning and, in the best lessons, good opportunities are provided for pupils to collate their ideas as a group. For example, older pupils worked together to create a plan before making a short video about their school. Such activities promote good development of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge of English and mathematics. Some teachers use questions effectively to extend pupils' learning further. This was seen, for example, in an English lesson for older pupils in Key Stage 2. This is not a common feature in the weaker lessons where, too often, the teacher spends too much time talking to the pupils about what to do next. Inspectors noted some good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching but not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching in all classes to involve pupils in their own learning. When teaching is good or better, planning clearly caters for the needs of all age groups and abilities within the class. This was seen in an outstanding English lesson for pupils in Year 1 and 2, where the interactive whiteboard was used very well to support teaching and collecting pupils' ideas for all to share.

Teachers are developing the use of marking to provide pupils with a better understanding of what they need to do next to improve. As yet, there is no agreed marking policy that can be used to ensure a consistent application of high-quality practice in marking pupils' work. However, some good practice is evident within the school to be used as an example for others to follow.

The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies from class to class. When it is good, teaching assistants are used effectively to support the progress of these pupils. Lesson planning does not fully cater for the needs of these pupils in the lessons requiring improvement, with the result that work is too hard and difficult for these pupils to complete.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils continues to improve and it is good in lessons and around the school. When given the opportunity, pupils work with enthusiasm in pairs and small groups and this supports their personal development well. Pupils say that behaviour has improved significantly since the school became an academy and that staff deal effectively with any misbehaviour. Pupils from the School Council say that they feel safe in school but some bullying can still occur. However, they say that when it happens, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.

Pupils show respect for each other; for instance, by listening to the views of others and contributions made in class discussions and assemblies. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning across a range of subjects, especially when they are set challenging work to do. However, they say that this is not always the case in all

classes. Older pupils value the depth of marking completed by their teachers. This is because it sets them targets to work at in order that they can improve, and time is allocated in lessons for them to make corrections and check their work.

Despite pupils demonstrating an increased enthusiasm for the interesting things planned for them to learn at the academy, attendance is well below the national average and is inadequate overall. Discussions with the headteacher and a review of procedures confirm that not enough is being done by the academy to work with families of persistent absentees to ensure that these pupils attend more regularly.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

Much has been achieved in a short time despite the several changes to school leadership since the start of the academy. A more positive and inclusive climate for learning has been established throughout the academy. A stronger sense of teamwork is now starting to emerge and subject leaders are taking more responsibility for foundation subjects. Furthermore, a trend of improving outcomes for pupils confirms that those with a senior leadership responsibility demonstrate the capacity for further improvement.

Self-evaluation is accurate. Teaching is monitored regularly by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and weaker performance is being addressed with some success. Regular progress meetings are held to support the performance management of teachers. As a result, all teachers take more responsibility for the progress their pupils are making. The consequence of these meetings is that the progress of all pupils is tracked more regularly but lacks enough detailed analysis to eliminate all gaps in pupils' achievement.

The curriculum continues to improve under the leadership of the current headteacher. There is now greater opportunity for pupils to develop their creative skills within a themed approach that links learning across different subjects, with some good opportunities for the development of pupils' writing skills. Activities include drama workshops, field trips to the beach, a range of clubs, and visits to places of interest. As a result, learning is more purposeful and relevant to the pupils' interests. These developments further support the effective promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, work covered in 'Black History month' included a detailed review of some famous black musicians and sports personalities that the pupils can easily relate to as well as famous black people from the past. Assemblies are well managed and provide good opportunities for parents and carers to be part of the school community and observe what their children have learnt in class.

There is evidence of continued improvement since the predecessor school was placed in special measures. Improvement plans identify actions against the priorities for improvement in the predecessor school's last inspection report and are set against targets linked to pupil outcomes. The academy sponsor monitors the

progress of the school against its key priorities regularly and implements intervention plans to ensure that more rapid progress is achieved.

The governing board provides effective oversight of the school's progress despite carrying several remaining vacancies. Roles and responsibilities are allocated to individual governors. However, the establishment of regular links between governors and staff who have leadership responsibility are at an early stage of development. Furthermore, the position of Chair is temporarily held by the Regional Director of the academy sponsor.

The partnership between the school and parental community has suffered because of the rapid transition to academy status and several changes to school leadership. The academy realises that there is a need to include parents and carers more in their children's learning and school life.

External support

The academy sponsor makes regular use of external consultants to monitor the school's work and identify what needs to be done next to improve in order to raise standards further. Good levels of expertise and support have been provided to improve the teaching and learning of mathematics. The effectiveness of support for improving teaching and learning in English and the Early Years Foundation Stage is yet to be fully reflected in better outcomes for learners.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve pupil attendance to national expected levels.
- Strengthen the partnership between the academy sponsor, staff, parents and carers and the wider school community.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Board and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector

Cc Stephen Chamberlain, Chair of the Governing Board, Langer Primary School
The Academies Advisers Unit, DfE [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk]