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13 May 2013

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

Dear Ms Culyer and Mr Krog

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Leys Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9–10 May 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 third 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 third monitoring inspection on 9–10 May 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, middle leaders, the Chair of the Monitoring Board of Governors and the local authority link adviser. Teaching was seen in every year group from Reception to Year 6. All of the 11 lessons seen were observed with the school's senior leaders. Pupils' work was looked at in lessons and the inspector looked at a random sample of English and mathematics books from pupils in Years 3, 5 and 6. Behaviour and safety were judged to be good at the last section 5 inspection so did not form part of this monitoring inspection.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection two teachers, one teaching assistant and one administrative assistant have left. Senior leaders know that three other teachers are leaving at the end of July. Arrangements to recruit five new teachers for September are underway. There are two vacancies on the governing body.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's own information on pupils' progress and the work seen in their books show that standards are rising in English and mathematics. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards are getting closer to those expected nationally for pupils of a similar age. Although the progress that pupils make is also accelerating at Key Stage 2, standards remain below average at the end of Year 6 because these pupils have yet to make up for more lost ground in the past. Expectations of the most able pupils are increasing. More pupils in Year 2 compared to last year are working at the higher Level 3 and for the first time the school has entered some Year 6 pupils for the highest Level 6 test in mathematics.

Most pupils throughout the school are making at least the progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Inconsistencies in the progress they make in different classes and subjects are reducing. However, the pace of learning for some pupils is still variable. In a few lessons seen, the most able and least able pupils did not make as much progress as they could when their work was not pitched at the right level.

Some refinements have been made to how the progress that individual pupils make during the year is recorded. As a result, important information to help compare the progress of pupils in different classes and subjects is now clearer for teachers, leaders and governors to see at a glance. Nevertheless, a similar analysis of how

well different groups of pupils are progressing, such as the most able and those with special educational needs, is not completed quickly enough to help leaders know whether all groups are doing as well as others. The assistant headteacher has started to investigate which additional support programmes for pupils who need to catch up are most effective but this work is at the early stages.

A priority has been given to improving the teaching of early reading in Key Stage 1 which is helping to raise standards. In the lessons seen, pupils developed a good understanding of the sounds that letters make. They were able to use their knowledge confidently to read unfamiliar words and spell them correctly.

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 – good

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring inspection. Incisive action has been taken to eradicate almost all of the inadequate teaching. Better teaching is starting to become more established and more good lessons were observed. Teachers who need to improve their classroom practice so that it is good are given relevant guidance and support to help them. Their performance is monitored carefully to make sure that the required improvements are being made.

There has been intensive training for all teachers on what makes good teaching and learning. Teachers are increasingly aware of the need to be vigilant in checking pupils' learning and correcting misconceptions throughout lessons. Some teachers and teaching assistants are more skilful at this than others so there were some occasions seen when errors were not corrected quickly enough and not all pupils were clear about what they should be doing.

In the most effective lessons, teachers taught the key concepts and skills in appropriate, bite-size pieces, checking at each step that pupils understood and were ready to move on to the next stage. There was a logical sequence to the learning taking place. Starting with what pupils already knew, teachers gave examples, allowed pupils the chance to practise and then moved them on to using their learning in more complex tasks which required them to think for themselves. Not all teachers have developed the ability to do this well. The pace of learning was hindered in some lessons when the teacher spent too long going over what the pupils already knew or moved on too quickly, leaving some pupils behind or confused.

In two of the lessons seen the work was not pitched at the right level for the less able pupils being supported by teaching assistants. The resources used to weigh objects and measure capacity were not suitable for these pupils to complete the task successfully. Consequently, their progress and involvement in the lesson were limited. Teaching assistants were not sufficiently well informed or carefully directed by the teacher to make sure these pupils got the most out of the lesson.

The quality of marking in pupils' books has improved. Teachers' comments are more specific about what pupils have done well and what more they need to do to progress to the next level in their learning. Useful points for improvement were more prevalent in the pupils' writing books than in their mathematics work.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders have been unwavering in their focus on improving teaching and learning. They have acted on the points raised in the previous monitoring inspection to make sure that the pace of improvement quickens. They have been incisive in responding to any inadequate lessons observed and are acting swiftly in response to the high number of teacher vacancies for September. Support for teachers who need to improve their skills further has been well focused and good use has been made of the expertise available in the federated school.

Teaching assistants have been given targets so that they can be held accountable for the difference they are making to pupils' learning and progress. Teachers are aware that it is their responsibility to use their teaching assistants effectively in lessons and plan relevant activities for all pupils. Leaders need to monitor closely that this is happening in all lessons and to act swiftly if it is not.

Middle leaders and the assistant headteacher have started to develop their lesson observation skills by working alongside others when appropriate. Their regular monitoring of teachers' planning and marking has given them a growing understanding of the key priorities in their areas of responsibility. The feedback they provide to teachers is increasingly focused on how lesson plans can be improved. Middle leaders and the assistant headteacher are being effectively supported in their work by the local authority and the federated school. As their skills develop, they will need to demonstrate the difference they are making to improving teaching and learning.

The monitoring board of governors is knowledgeable about the progress the school is making and what more still needs to be done. The challenge and support these governors provide have helped senior leaders to keep a sharp focus on the key

priorities and take difficult decisions when needed. Less experienced governors are gaining an insight, through the example of the monitoring board, into how leaders are held accountable for pupils' performance. Senior leaders are also helping the governing body to become more effective by giving them detailed, easily understood information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

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

Well-targeted support from the local authority and the federated school is helping senior leaders to make the improvements needed. By working alongside teachers to improve their practice and assess pupils' work accurately, local authority advisers and teachers from Beam Primary School have helped to quicken the pace of improvement. The inclusion manager is being assisted to strengthen the organisation of special educational needs in the school but this work is not yet complete. The local authority link adviser knows the school well and meets with senior leaders and governors regularly to provide additional support when needed. As the school builds its capacity to improve, the need for external support will decrease.