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22 May 2013

Mrs C Holgate
Acting Headteacher
Lowerhouse Junior School
Liverpool Road
Burnley
Lancashire
BB12 6LN

Dear Mrs Holgate

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lowerhouse Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 21 May 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, executive headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

The headteacher at the time of the last inspection retired on 30 April. The deputy headteacher has been appointed as acting headteacher until 31 December 2013. She is supported by an executive headteacher, who is the experienced substantive headteacher of another junior school from within the local authority, and is also a Local Leader of Education. An experienced deputy headteacher, seconded from another Lancashire school, will join the staff on a temporary basis on 3 June 2013.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The school-improvement plan addresses all the weaknesses that were identified in the section 5 inspection. It is well written and includes clear success criteria and arrangements

for leaders and governors to check on the impact of actions they are taking. The acting headteacher is implementing the plan systematically and rigorously. The school's plan dovetails with the local authority's plan. The support from local authority consultants and advisers is clearly documented and appropriately targeted. Local authority consultants are working with the acting headteacher to implement a coaching programme to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers have agreed standards to follow with regard to lesson planning and marking. School leaders are checking lessons and pupils' books regularly to ensure that high quality work becomes the norm. The school environment has been tidied and improved through the more thoughtful display of pupils' work. The professional support of the executive headteacher is having a positive impact on developing leadership capacity. Well-considered plans are in place for sharing good practice in teaching, including by Lowerhouse teachers visiting the executive headteacher's school.

Governors have taken steps to ensure that they have robust and reliable information on which to evaluate the school's effectiveness. They are receiving training from the local authority to equip them to challenge and support school leaders and teachers. The school's spending plans have been revised so that pupil-premium funding is used properly to support eligible pupils. Governors now understand the relationship between pupils' achievement and teachers' pay and know how to ensure that pay performance is dealt with equitably to raise standards. They are establishing closer individual links with classes to strengthen their insight. The local authority has established a governors' standards and effectiveness committee, attended by an adviser, through which governors are checking on the detailed progress being made in strengthening leadership, improving teaching and raising standards. Arrangements for the recruitment of a permanent headteacher have been put in place.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector