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13 June 2013

Mr Jonathan Nichols
Acting Headteacher
Heygreen Community Primary School
Taunton Street
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Liverpool
Merseyside
L15 4ND

Dear Mr Nichols

Special measures monitoring inspection of Heygreen Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 June 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 March 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and two further governors and two representatives of the local authority including the school improvement partner. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. In addition, Her Majesty's Inspector completed a learning walk around the school accompanied by the acting headteacher.

Context

An acting headteacher was installed two weeks prior to the monitoring inspection due to the headteacher's absence through illness. There continue to be significant staffing issues at the school with three full-time teaching staff, including the headteacher absent. A teacher has recently returned from maternity leave, although two other teachers are due to leave at the end of term. The school and local authority are working in tandem towards ensuring that a stable staff structure is in place for the start of the autumn term.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Staff, governors, the local authority and parents acknowledge the reasons why the school was judged to need special measures. No-one is under any illusions about the amount of hard work needed to improve the school. There is a clear understanding that there needs to be greater transparency in management. Ineffective systems and practice need to be challenged and, where appropriate, dismantled to ensure that the school begins to function effectively and that all pupils receive the best possible education in the future. Staff attitudes are determined and positive.

As a result of the absence of the headteacher, an acting headteacher was appointed by the local authority a fortnight ago and tasked with effecting change and managing improvement. He is clearly aware of the multiple issues which have held back progress and created a culture of underperformance. In the two weeks he has been in post, he has identified, as a priority, the need to reassess the staffing structure and redistribute responsibilities in the school. To this effect, time is being freed up to allow the deputy headteacher to participate in a more rigorous and developmental monitoring and professional development programme. A clear approach to teaching writing across the school is now in place to ensure that the process is systematic, does not confuse the pupils and leads to better progression in learning. A concise and common framework for teaching reading is also being established. A daily timetable is also now in place to ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching literacy and numeracy. A monitoring cycle to assess impact has also been planned. Foundation subjects, such as art, design and technology, history and geography are currently taught in an integrated way. Staff currently do not possess the subject knowledge or expertise to plan and teach these effectively. The intention, in the near future, is to teach these subjects discretely so that the teachers are clear about the parameters of each subject and are not distracted and confused by trying to make tenuous links. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes on pupils' learning, but they have raised staff morale. Given the fragility of staff and the relative inexperience of some of the teachers, it is imperative that leaders and those supporting the school ensure that guidance is clear and straightforward and that staffing issues are stabilised as quickly as possible.

The local authority has regarded the school as causing concern for some time but was unaware of the full depth of the problems. A clear structure of intensive support is being put in place, including the appointment of the seconded acting headteacher. An interim executive board, comprising two governors and four co-opted members of the local authority is awaiting approval from the Department for Education. This is intended to provide regular and more rigorous challenge to school managers and more frequent monitoring of the progress being made. The current governing body will continue to manage the day-to-day administration of the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements. There is an alternative strategy in place to stabilise staffing from the autumn term. The intention is to draft in good quality seconded teachers, should the current recruitment process not identify suitable replacements.

Relationships with parents have become strained. Some of the recent changes have at least allayed some of their concerns. However, there remains a need to continue to develop these relationships to ensure that faith in the school is fully restored so that parents can participate in, and contribute more effectively to, their children's learning.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose but will need to be reviewed in the light of emerging issues and the changing needs of the school as these become identified.

The school's improvement plan has been drawn up by the acting headteacher and tackles the key issues identified in the recent inspection report. It is fit for purpose but will also need to be refined and adjusted in the light of the on-going analysis and review of the school's needs.

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 for Children and Young People's Services for Liverpool. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely,

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector