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5 December 2013

Dr Philip Cross
Executive Headteacher
Langford Primary School
Gilstead Road
London
SW6 2LG

Dear Dr Cross

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Langford Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 2013 I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in March 2013. 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 the serious weakness designation.

The school's statement of action is now fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is now fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Marcia Headon
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good in order to raise the achievement of all pupils in English, writing especially, and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers talk less in lessons so pupils are more actively involved in their learning
 - teachers always have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers make careful checks in lessons on pupils' understanding and intervene quickly to correct any misunderstandings
 - pupils are given regular opportunities to act on teachers' comments in their marking so they know what to do to improve their work
 - pupils are provided with opportunities to write at length across all subjects to improve their writing, including spelling, grammar and punctuation
 - there is more emphasis on mental mathematics and different methods of calculating to solve problems.

- Improve the effectiveness of senior leaders and governors by:
 - improving the quality of the checks made on pupils' progress and using the information more effectively to target support for learners who are underachieving
 - making sure that governors make regular visits to the school so that they get to know its work really well, to enable them to hold senior leaders to account for improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - enhancing governors' skills in understanding information about pupils' performance, including how well different groups are doing compared with their classmates and schools nationally.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 4 December 2013

Evidence

The inspector met with the executive headteacher, an advisory head and a leadership consultant, both of whom are supporting the school, the interim headteacher of the school, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. The inspector jointly observed five lessons with either the executive headteacher or the advisory headteacher or the leadership consultant working with the school. In lessons, the inspector talked to pupils and viewed their work. The inspector scrutinised the school's action plans and information on pupils' progress. She checked the single central register. The inspector looked at examples of pupils' writing. She also considered the local authority's revised statement of action.

Context

The executive headteacher continues to have overall responsibility for the school. The substantive headteacher left the school in mid-September. An advisory headteacher and a leadership consultant are currently supporting the interim headteacher, who is normally the substantive deputy headteacher. An intervention leader joined the school in September. One teacher left in October and three are leaving at the end of the current term.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since September, when the advisory headteacher and leadership consultant started at the school there has been a rapid acceleration in the rate of progress which the school is now making. Although the results in the national tests taken by Year 6 pupils in summer 2013 showed an increase on those of 2012 and were above the targets set by the government as the minimum expected, the school leadership recognised that the pace of improvement last term was too slow. The gap in achievement between those pupils in receipt of the pupil premium (funding allocated to provide extra support for pupils who are in receipt of free school meals, are in care or come from service families) and others was still too wide. The senior leadership team understands clearly the areas which need improvement and it has produced revised action plans which are sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching. These are just beginning to have an impact, although the leadership team is fully aware that there is still a long way to go. It has now established an accurate picture of pupils' current attainment and progress and set challenging targets for the school, which it is monitoring closely. The advisory headteacher and leadership consultant are checking the quality of teaching in lessons closely, are giving detailed feedback to staff on their teaching and, where necessary, are providing coaching for teachers. Joint lesson observations undertaken during the monitoring inspection demonstrate that senior leaders are able to make accurate judgements on the

quality of teaching. They have set out their expectations very clearly and operate as an effective team, which is determined to improve the school.

The current structure of the school is being revised to address the current lack of capacity at middle management level. The new intervention leader is monitoring the work of the support staff and the interim head of school is being released from some of his Year 6 teaching commitment to enable him to work alongside other teachers. Nevertheless, the school is currently very dependent upon the work of the advisory headteachers in driving improvements.

The governing body has been restructured and it has now a much greater awareness of the situation in the school. Governors have paid a number of visits to the school to observe teaching, to look at work and to talk to pupils. They are developing an awareness of how to interpret the information about pupils' achievement. An external review of governance is about to commence and this will guide their future training needs. However, the governing body has not yet addressed the issue of the appointment of a substantive head of school and until this key appointment is made and middle management secured, the continued progress cannot be guaranteed.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The changes which have been made to the structure of the day to place the teaching of literacy and numeracy at the beginning of the day have ensured a much stronger focus is placed on these key skills by all. Pupils expect to work on these and to practise their skills in the topic work which is timetabled for the afternoon.
- The work which the senior leadership team has undertaken in planning lessons jointly with staff and in modelling how this should be done has improved the quality of teaching. It has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. The planning includes defining precisely objectives, which are shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and which enable pupils to understand what it is they should be learning.
- The work of the intervention manager is ensuring that support assistants are better directed and more focused on pupils' learning. Their work is monitored closely to ensure that pupils who need additional support are being given the appropriate help. There is still a need for further training, especially in helping the support assistants to ask more detailed questions and not to complete work for pupils.
- The school's revised marking policy has ensured that there is a standard approach to how teachers mark work which indicates the next steps which should be taken by pupils. However, not all teachers give detailed enough next steps and they are not ensuring that pupils are given time to follow up

on the advice or improvements suggested. At times, even when corrections have been made, some further errors remain uncorrected.

- The regular weekly meetings for staff are used effectively to improve teachers' skills and to update their knowledge and understanding. Good practice has been shared and the development of staff has been fostered by improving their teaching of English and mathematics through training from a variety of different professionals.
- The more accurate information about pupils' attainment and progress has enabled teachers to match work more closely to pupils' abilities. Teachers' understanding in how to use this information has improved although some teachers still lack confidence in making assessments of pupils' work.
- Pupils' writing across the school has improved. Strategies such as the 'Big Write' have improved writing and the work in books shows that pupils are encouraged to write for a variety of audiences and reasons in all year groups. However, there is still room for further extended writing, without the smaller pieces of practice work beforehand which some teachers use to build up skills.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The quality of teaching and learning remains inconsistent with not enough that is graded as good. In some lessons the pace of learning is not fast enough and teachers sometimes miss opportunities to extend pupils' thinking or to develop a point which has interested the pupils.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters and combinations of letters make) across the school remains weak. The results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 1, although an increase on 2012, were still well below the national average. Teachers further up the school do not routinely use phonics to help pupils work out how to read words or to help with spelling. There is also a lack of emphasis upon the teaching of grammar and spelling.
- Teachers' questioning skills are not of a consistently high quality. Some teachers do not ask challenging enough questions or are too easily satisfied with the answers which pupils give. In other lessons, while pupils are sensibly encouraged to share their answers with their peers, the teacher does not then follow up on these discussions with further questions to deepen knowledge.
- In some lessons teachers still talk for too long before pupils settle to work independently. This leads to pupils becoming less engaged with their learning. Conversely, at times teachers leave pupils to work by themselves for too long before they check understanding.

External support

The local authority has supported the school and is committed to the school continuing to work in federation with the neighbouring secondary school. The local authority has revised its statement of action which now contains details of the resources it is providing and the intended outcomes. It dovetails well with the school's action plans. However, the local authority statement needs a minor amendment to include details of the exit strategy for the support it is giving to the school. The local authority has been very active in helping the governing body, providing an additional governor and guiding its development. It has provided support to the school when it has been requested by the senior leadership team. It has commissioned a review of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision, conducted a review of teaching and learning and local authority staff have led training on lesson observation and phonics.