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20 March 2014

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

Dear Mr Nichols

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Heygreen Community Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 and 19 March 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013. 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.

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

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

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

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

### **Area for improvement 1**

Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is at least good in all year groups by:

- ensuring that pupils know their targets and how to achieve them, are clear about what is expected of them and understand how to tackle tasks so that they can complete them successfully without relying too heavily on support from adults
- ensuring that the work given to pupils matches their varying needs and abilities and is not too easy or too difficult
- improving marking so that pupils are always given good written guidance about how they can improve their work, especially their writing.

### **Area for improvement 2**

Rapidly raise **pupils' attainment, especially that of boys, in their reading and writing**, so that it is at least in line with national expectations and pupils make good or better progress by:

- ensuring that reading and writing skills are taught systematically as pupils move through the school
- making sure that the work provided and the resources used in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and guided reading lessons, precisely match pupils' varying knowledge and skills
- improving pupils' skills in spelling, punctuation, grammar and handwriting
- providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills in subjects other than English.

### **Area for improvement 3**

Urgently improve **the impact of leadership, management and governance** so that the school's performance improves rapidly by:

- taking swift action to eliminate inadequate teaching and to improve the remainder
- ensuring there is a clear, whole-school focus on raising attainment in reading and writing
- ensuring senior leaders responsible for leading subjects are given the time and opportunity to be fully involved in checking that the quality of teaching is at least good, that all pupils are making at least good progress and that, as leaders, they are leading improvement in their subjects, especially in English
- making sure that all teachers are held accountable for the progress pupils make
- ensuring governors have a good understanding of the school's performance and the impact of strategies aimed at raising pupils' achievement as well as closing the wide gaps in the performance of different groups, especially that of the boys
- undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

#### **Area for improvement 4**

Continue to **improve attendance** by finding effective ways to support those pupils who are frequently absent and their families, so that the pupils attend school more regularly.

**Report on the third monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 March**

## **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, members of the senior management team, a couple of middle leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the School Improvement Partner. In addition, discussions were held with groups of pupils, parents and a representative from the local authority. Lessons were observed in every year group in the school as well as several other teaching sessions. The inspector, accompanied by the acting headteacher, observed parts of phonics (the teaching of letters and the sounds they make) and guided reading sessions. All of the lesson observations were joint observations with the acting headteacher. Pupils were also heard reading and a selection of books was scrutinised to determine how well pupils were learning over time and how they were developing their writing in the context of other subjects.

## **Context**

The high level of staff turbulence has now abated and there is much greater stability among the teaching staff. Remaining staffing issues have now been resolved. An experienced teacher, seconded from the partner school, St Silas, continues to provide stability for the critically important Year 6 class. Two new teachers have been appointed, replacing two temporary teachers, and they started teaching in Years 1 and 3 from January. Another teacher has returned from a period of long term absence. An Interim Executive Board continues to provide governance of the school and two new members have been appointed following the resignation of two governor members of the original Board.

## **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Improvements in outcomes for pupils are continuing to be made. Attainment in English and mathematics is continuing to improve but remains below national averages, mainly due to several years of underachievement which caused the school to be placed into special measures in the first place. The greater stability in staffing is contributing to the improving consistency in progress that the greater majority of pupils are making from class to class. However, the lack of good teaching over a number of years means that pupils have to catch up in their reading, writing and mathematics. This is compounded by the fact that many pupils enter the school with skills which are well below those expected for their age. This is especially noticeable in some classes, such as the current Year 3, where pupils have had significant disruption to their learning in the past and many are up to a year behind where they should be at this stage in their learning. This legacy has also had an impact on the progress of different groups which also varies from class to class with no discernible pattern. For example, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are currently outperforming the other pupils in some classes, such as Year 1, and are making more progress in Year 5. In other classes, pupils not eligible for free school meals

are performing better. There is no significant pattern emerging across the school with each individual cohort presenting its own individual characteristics. A similar lack of pattern can be seen in the progress being made by groups of girls and boys because the ratio between the genders varies so much across classes.

The switch to discrete teaching in other subjects, including science, rather than teaching through topics, is having a positive impact on raising standards. This is especially noticeable in language rich subjects such as history and geography. Improved teaching and a clear focus on what needs to be taught is providing a rich context in improving writing, in particular. Evidence from pupils' work shows that good use is also being made of 'out of classroom' learning. The local area is being used much more frequently to provide an excellent stimulus to improve pupils' writing. Pupils commented that their work is now 'more fun, but also more challenging', although higher ability pupils are still not being stretched enough.

There remain issues with the Early Years Foundation Stage. While teachers' planning provides an outline of their expectations this is not always evident in the outcomes, especially in the learning the children make. Mixing the Nursery and Reception children for free play is not encouraging the personal, social and emotional development of boys in particular or enhancing their communication skills. As a result, boys, especially, are too immature and not well prepared for more formal work in Year 1. Children are not always provided with, or directed to, the most appropriate work that meets their ability and guidance on how to make next steps in their development is often vague.

Improved assessment and recording is now providing a more accurate picture of the progress individual pupils are making. Overall the trend of improvement is positive and this is reflected in pupils' own opinions that they feel they are making improvements in their reading and writing especially. Inconsistencies which remain across the school are being ironed out.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching continues to improve, with consistently good teaching now more evident in Key Stage 2. Staffing stability ensures that pupils are getting greater continuity in their learning. It is noticeable that, on those few occasions where a teacher has been absent for a short period of time, pupils' work has suffered and this is clearly evident in their books. The re-organisation of phonics teaching into ability groups, coupled with training for staff, has improved the quality of reading and the ability of pupils to sound words. Further training is needed to ensure that teaching assistants are secure and confident when they work with small groups of pupils. Pupils are enjoying reading and the introduction of an organised reading scheme across the school is leading to pupils making good progress in their reading, especially at Key Stage 2.

The switch to teaching subjects discretely is also having a positive impact on improving teaching and learning. Teachers are becoming more confident because they are being provided with appropriate resources and guidance and pupils' experiences are being enhanced through visits and events. Pupils commented positively about the impact this was having on their learning. They talked engagingly about their walk in the surrounding area to explore the industrial history of Wavertree. Writing in Year 2, based on the creative video visit of a historical figure from the past, resulted in some excellent work based on this experience. Numeracy skills are also being enhanced through real life situations such as traffic surveys being carried out in geography with pupils developing mapping skills using real maps of their local area to support their understanding and use of co-ordinates. These improvements are supporting the development of basic skills well by providing real and stimulating contexts for learning. There could be further improvements, for example in science, where analysis and recount of experiments is not always done well. There is also a strong focus on improving spelling, punctuation and handwriting, with evidence from pupils' books that this is getting better. However, this is not yet fully embedded in all classes because pupils still do not use, or have access, to a thesaurus or a dictionary on a regular basis.

The marking of pupils' work and the feedback they receive has also improved, and in some cases is outstanding. It is especially detailed in English books. However, there still remain some inconsistencies in application across classes.

The clear focus on improving teachers' subject knowledge and confidence in teaching a range of subjects is having a positive impact on pupils learning and engagement. As one pupil summarised 'lessons are now more educational and less time is wasted'.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour around the school and in lessons continues to improve, although there are still some pupils, in a few classes, who lack the social skills and maturity to work in a more formal environment. This is especially noticeable in the younger age classes where boys in particular, can still demand too much attention and disrupt learning for others. In those classes where there have been no changes of teacher, there is a more positive attitude to learning. Pupils also identified that they can now get on with their learning, something which may have been more difficult previously. Pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, are becoming more used to working in small mixed ability groups and take pride in helping and supporting each other. Classes in Key Stage 1 and Year 3 still suffer from fidgety behaviour, a legacy of weak teaching in the past and frequent changes of teacher.

Attendance continues to improve and is now close to the national average. Pupils are enjoying coming to school more because lessons are more engaging and enjoyable. Several commented about the positive changes they have noticed. They

enjoy the increased opportunities to visit places and work outside the classroom. Parents identified that the improvements meant they were less reluctant to come to school because it had become a more enjoyable experience.

Pupils have positive attitudes. They feel safe in a community that they feel they belong in and in which bullying has sharply declined. They are adamant that behaviour has improved and this is noticeable in the day to day routines around the school. 'We used to mess around in assembly, but now all the teachers are there – we don't'. They approve of the requirement to wear school uniform and one youngster even stated 'if we dress smart we think smart and we work harder. You become wiser and feel more grown up'.

Statutory safeguarding requirements are in place and secure.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The school is improving because there is now greater stability in staffing and teachers have bought into the changes which are being initiated. Morale is much improved and staff are much clearer about what is expected from them. They are benefitting from good and focused support as well as the many new opportunities to develop their skills as a teacher. Parents continue to be positive about how the school is changing for the better.

The acting headteacher has a clear understanding of the weaknesses of the school and what needs to be done to address these. He has chipped away to remove barriers and re-focus teachers and support staff on the basics of good teaching. Monitoring is accurate and weaknesses identified through lesson observations, learning walks or work scrutiny are quickly challenged. The result is that the school is well placed to consolidate improvements and it is now functioning as an effective unit. Middle leadership remains at an embryonic stage of development but staff stability means it is now better placed to make an impact in the near future. Clear policies and procedures are outlined in a staff handbook and are becoming more firmly embedded in everyday practice. For example, previously the teaching of reading was dysfunctional. Now it has been re-organised, outdated resources have been removed and pupils are clearly allocated a book which is more appropriate to their reading ability. This provides the challenge to enable them to progress onto more difficult books more quickly. Parents identified that their children were 'learning much more than previously'.

There is also greater transparency and parents are welcomed into the school. The monitoring inspection coincided with a parents' morning where parents were invited to attend morning classes to observe their children at work. Attendance could be better, but more parents attended this event than previously. Parents also identified that the school, school managers and teachers are more accessible. 'If you have a problem, it is dealt with quickly – not like before!' The school blog is being used



more extensively to share and celebrate the day to day work of the school. Pupils enjoy seeing their work on line. However, although invited to comment, too few parents to date express opinions using this process.

The members of the Interim Executive Board continue to meet regularly, as well as participate in challenge meetings, to monitor and discuss progress. They are aware of the issues still confronting the school but can also articulate the progress that has been made. Their attention is currently focused on the on-going re-organisation of the school.

The school is clearly making progress but school managers, leaders and the local authority are realistic about the challenges that still remain. They can celebrate the fact that parents feel that the school 'is better organised and their children are no longer reluctant to attend'. The pupils also feel that the school is 'getting better and lessons are more challenging'. This is the best testimony to the progress that has been made to date. This needs to be built on and sustained if the school is to move out of special measures in the near future.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to be very supportive of the school and a strong partnership has developed to ensure improvement remains on track. The local authority continues to monitor the school on a regular basis with officers also attending the monthly challenge meetings. Detailed reviews are also carried out each term to monitor and confirm progress. The latest review identified the impact that the improvements are making but also recognised the inconsistencies that remain, especially lower down the school. The positive links established with St Silas, the partner school, continue to provide good support and expertise which is helping to raise teacher confidence and develop classroom skills. The professional relationships which have been established continue to be positive and beneficial.