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17 December 2014

Christopher Hayes
Winter Gardens Primary School
Hilton Road
Canvey Island
SS8 9QA

Dear Mr Hayes

Special measures monitoring inspection of Winter Gardens Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 December 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 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 October 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, two members of the newly formed strategic intervention board, a representative of the local authority and two newly qualified teachers (NQTs). The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. The single central record was checked and found to be accurate.

Context

You joined the school in June 2014, the term prior to the last inspection. Four teachers are currently on long-term sick and the school has a further two teaching vacancies. The school has advertised teaching posts on a number of occasions, both locally and nationally, but has not been successful in appointing high-quality staff to these positions. These classes are being adequately covered by the restructuring of the timetable for all teaching groups and all of the new

leadership team are teaching class groups. The remaining class will be covered by a supply teacher while the school re-advertises its vacant posts.

You have created a new leadership structure for January, which includes an interim deputy headteacher for the spring term. An internal appointment has been made to the assistant headteacher post. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has been appointed for one term initially.

As a result of the inspection, the local authority has removed delegated powers for finance and human resources and has put in place a strategic intervention board. An application has been made to appoint an interim executive board.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

With the support of the local authority, the current leadership is producing improvement. However, high levels of staff absence are having a significant impact on the speed of change. The new leadership team has capacity to drive developments but, due to their teaching commitment, this is limited by the time they have available. The recruitment of staff is key to the success of the school's action plan, and this must be addressed urgently so that senior leaders have the time to implement the planned improvements.

The strategic improvement board (SIB), instigated by the local authority, is made up of the headteacher, one member of the governing body and two local authority representatives. They have an accurate understanding of the difficulties faced by the school. School leaders review the action plan fortnightly and outcomes are reported to the SIB every half term.

The support provided by the local authority has been timely and appropriate to the needs of the school. Local authority advisers are working in key areas to improve standards. Some of this work is already having a positive impact. For example, in the early years, children are now engaged in a stimulating range of free-flow activities and there is an appropriate mix of child-initiated and adult-led learning opportunities.

The introduction of a more-rigorous performance management process and increased monitoring of the quality of teaching are beginning to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. The headteacher is being held to account by the SIB through the targets identified in the local authority action plan. This includes targets for improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress

The two newly qualified teachers are benefiting from the support of experienced colleagues who are ensuring that the new teachers are being supported and

challenged effectively. Both feel that they are gaining in confidence as a result of the constructive feedback they receive.

The school and local authority action plan appropriately address all the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. There are realistic timescales for the actions that need to be taken, and an appropriate sense of urgency.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

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

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint any more newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection and must ensure that the package of support offered to the current newly qualified teachers remains of good quality.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the strategic intervention board and the Director of Children's Services for Essex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector