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27 February 2015

Mr Nick Watkiss
The Headteacher
Willow Brook Primary School Academy
190 Church Road
Leyton
London
E10 7BH

Dear Mr Watkiss

Special measures monitoring inspection of Willow Brook Primary School Academy

Following my visit with Lynton Karmock-Golds, Her Majesty's Inspector, Vanessa Tomlinson (Additional Inspector) and June Woolhouse (Additional Inspector) to your school on 26 and 27 February 2015, 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 academy's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2014. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that the academy may appoint one newly qualified teacher.

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 Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for
Waltham Forest and the Academies Advisors Unit at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2014

- As a matter of urgency, improve the safety of the pupils by ensuring that:
 - the school site is fully secure at all times
 - routines for monitoring access into the school are rigorously applied.

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good, in order to raise pupils' attainment and ensure that they achieve well across the school, by:
 - eradicating weak or inadequate teaching
 - raising expectations for all pupils and making sure that work given to them is interesting and challenging, especially for more-able pupils
 - using information on pupils' attainment and progress to make sure activities meet the needs of all ability groups, especially for those pupils with special educational needs and the more-able
 - extending pupils' literacy and numeracy skills in different ways, including ensuring staff help pupils to develop their reading skills effectively
 - establishing a consistent approach to marking to help pupils improve their work
 - insisting on better standards of spelling and presentation across the school
 - improving provision in the Reception and Nursery classes by ensuring that children have increased understanding of how to use resources in the outdoor area.

- Improve leadership, management and governance by ensuring that:
 - systems to check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress are regularly and rigorously applied
 - all teachers and leaders are held accountable for their practice and are aware of how their performance links to improvements in pupils' achievement
 - disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive timely, appropriate support so that they make rapid progress
 - the use of additional funding such as that used to support pupils eligible for free school meals is rigorously monitored
 - ways are found to engage effectively with parents and carers, to both listen to and respond to their views, to help them support their child's learning
 - the governing body takes further steps to ensure that its work has the required impact on improving the school.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 26–27 February 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and the senior leadership team, the recently appointed director of inclusion, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors. Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and heard some pupils read during visits to lessons. The lead inspector had a telephone discussion with the external consultant engaged to support improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit a director of inclusion has been appointed. Four members of staff have left the academy since the last monitoring visit and have been replaced. The stand-alone status of the academy continues. Plans for the Griffin School Trust to adopt the academy have been postponed until 1 April 2015. However, the trust continues to offer extensive support to the academy, as it has done since January 2014. There have been no other changes to school staff or roles since the first monitoring visit.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The rate of pupils' progress is gaining pace. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with low levels of achievement, particularly in speaking. Pupils are now working towards a good level of development more rapidly. This is because teachers are identifying what pupils are able to do with greater precision. This enables them to provide more challenging activities as soon as children are ready for them. Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Year 3 who were not meeting the expected standards in reading are catching up. A scheme introduced to help them is being used well to track and respond to each small step they make in their progress.

Levels of attainment still vary too much between classes, subjects and groups of pupils. More of the younger pupils achieve expected levels of attainment than those in the older year groups. In some cases there is still much to do. For example, in Year 4, less than half of the pupils are working at the levels expected in reading, writing and mathematics. Much of this is due to a legacy of previous underachievement. However, remaining variations in the quality of teaching also contribute to these inconsistencies.

Work in books shows variations in achievement too. In most work seen it is clear that the increasingly positive attitude of pupils is contributing well to improvements in progress. Standards of presentation are improving. Pupils are given help to correct spellings more regularly. Pupils are making the most progress when teachers

consistently set work which is a good match to their abilities. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.

The quality of teaching

The weakest teaching has been eradicated successfully. The quality of teaching is improving, but it remains variable. In the best examples of teaching there is an effective combination of interesting, relevant work and skilful questioning. This enables teachers to intervene promptly to check understanding and provide further challenge. However, other teachers are setting some work which is already well within the capability of their pupils. This holds up progress in learning. Pupils are not always provided with sufficient guidance to help them understand how to improve their work.

Teachers are applying agreed policies more consistently. Leaders have made sure all teachers have received training in the use of newly introduced resources and teaching techniques. For example, the agreed approach for guided reading is well established. However, some teachers are more successful than others in implementing it effectively.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is an improvement in the accuracy with which teachers identify and record the achievements of pupils. This helps them to provide additional challenges as soon as children are ready. Some children are still unsure about how to use the outdoor area. For example, reluctant writers are not provided with enough guidance to help them develop their writing skills outside.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well and demonstrate a pride in belonging to the academy. They exemplify positive attitudes to learning, even when work is too repetitive or lacks sufficient challenge. Parents say they have noticed the improvements in the behaviour of pupils. They are more confident in the academy as a result.

A small number of pupils continue to behave in an inappropriate way on occasion. Senior leaders intervene promptly and robustly to deal with this. They also insist that everyone upholds the shared values which have been mutually agreed upon.

School leaders and governors have ensured that the academy premises are now secure and well supervised. They make sure all those working in and visiting the academy know about the academy's policies. Safeguarding arrangements are now strong and meet statutory requirements. The senior leader responsible for safeguarding has established effective partnerships with all those working to support vulnerable pupils.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

School leaders are doing the right things in the right order. The headteacher is providing very clear leadership to the whole academy community. The weakest teaching has been eradicated. Seniors leaders have made sure systems to track achievement are more effective and better understood. They have revised the way they check on teaching with the help of an external consultant. Leaders' evaluation of teaching is more accurate and specific as a result. Teachers are being held more closely to account for the impact of their teaching over time on achievement. The newly appointed director of inclusion has begun to improve checks on the impact of support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, school leaders are not clear enough about how their rate of progress compares with that of other pupils.

Leaders are providing a systematic programme of staff training. Decisions on training needs are based on accurate monitoring of the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers. The impact of training is being checked up on when teaching is monitored.

Systems to track the progress of disadvantaged pupils are helping identify priorities for spending the additional funding to which they are entitled.

Parents appreciate and acknowledge the improvements which leaders have brought about. Pupils mentioned positive change to inspectors which they said were a result of the actions of the headteacher since his arrival. The headteacher and other senior leaders have persuaded more parents to take an active part in the life of the academy. This is due to the sense of ambition and shared values they have managed to communicate clearly.

Senior leaders have well-considered plans to develop middle leadership. They have rightly placed a priority on developing the teaching skills of middle leaders. For example, in pupil progress meetings some middle leaders are now capable of moderating assessments within their areas of responsibility independently of senior leaders.

Governors have agreed an unambiguous approach to their work. They benefit from regular training opportunities to develop their roles further. For example, the Chair of the Governing Body coaches governor colleagues during meetings. Links with the governing body of a neighbouring school are also helping governors gain a broader understanding of their responsibilities.

Governors have clear strategic plans for the future development of leadership. They receive frequent and detailed updates on the work of the academy. However, the range of evidence which they consider to build a picture of the school is too limited.

This is beginning to improve as leaders establish more precise and detailed methods to evaluate the achievement of pupils.

External support

An independent consultant has helped leaders monitor the quality of teaching more effectively. Another consultant has worked with the Early Years Foundation Stage to improve the impact of assessment on learning. He has also provided valuable advice on the further development of the outdoor area. The director of school improvement for the Griffin Schools Trust is providing strong support and challenge for strategic leadership.