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20 March 2015

Mrs Catherine Stalham  
Acting Headteacher  
Winter Gardens Primary School  
Hilton Road  
Canvey Island  
Essex  
SS8 9QA

Dear Mrs Stalham

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Winter Gardens Primary School**

Following my visit with Timothy McGuire, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18–19 March 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 school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 not making enough 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Essex.

Yours sincerely

Mary Rayner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of the Governing Body  
cc. Local authority  
cc. The Secretary of State

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - eradicating weak teaching as quickly as possible by sharing the good practice within the school so that all teachers meet the required standards
  - giving children in the early years choices about their learning and encouraging them to investigate more widely
  - insisting that pupils take greater care in the presentation of their work.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress particularly at Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, so that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and the most able, achieve well, by:
  - making sure that teachers plan activities at the right level of difficulty
  - making sure that teachers and other adults explain carefully what pupils need to do, and check pupils' understanding.
- Make sure that actions taken to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance are followed up by:
  - ensuring that all adults manage pupils' behaviour in ways consistent with the school's policy
  - keeping better records of any incidents or concerns and sharing these with appropriate staff so that action can be followed up.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by
  - making sure that governors develop their skills to support and challenge the school rigorously
  - helping teachers with extra responsibilities to carry out their roles so that they can support improvements in teaching, in particular in reading, writing and mathematics
  - making sure that teachers' plans make effective use of information on how well the pupils are doing
  - ensuring that teachers are held to account for the progress made by pupils in their class, so that only the best performance is rewarded
  - producing a more specific plan to tackle weaknesses in achievement and in teaching which helps all leaders and managers to take more urgent action
  - ensuring that the best use is made of funds to support the needs of disadvantaged pupils, so that gaps in achievement are closed.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 18–19 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work including 14 lessons, six of which were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised documents and examples of pupils' work. They met with the acting headteacher, other leaders, and groups of teachers, including the two newly qualified teachers and the lead teachers for English and mathematics. They held meetings with groups of pupils, the Chair and one other member of the Interim Executive Board, a representative from the local authority and the executive headteacher from the South Essex Academy Trust which is scheduled to take over the management of the school from 1 July 2015. Contact by phone was also made to two off-site providers used by the school to offer alternative education to pupils.

### **Context**

In the absence of the substantive headteacher, an acting headteacher has been appointed. One member of teaching staff has left the school and a further four teachers are currently on sick leave. One of these posts is covered by a current member of staff and the remaining roles are covered by long-term and short-term supply teachers. A further four teachers will be leaving at Easter. Six teachers have been appointed and will join the school after Easter. New appointments include a seconded interim deputy headteacher, a substantive assistant headteacher, a lead practitioner, a special educational needs coordinator and two other teachers. A further three teachers will be joining the school in September.

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

Since the previous inspection visit, not enough improvement has been made and standards remain low in almost all year groups. The school's own data is not accurate, and achievement remains too low because there is not enough good teaching.

Alongside the assistant headteacher, you have identified that assessments of the skills and abilities of children in most year groups are not based on a sound understanding of the national expectations and are not accurate. Under your leadership, reassessment of all pupils has taken place and moderation of these levels is currently happening to ensure that teachers have an accurate view of the current ability levels of each individual pupil. Where this has already happened, improvements have been made to the learning opportunities offered to children. For example, in Year 5, the secure information on current levels is enabling teachers to plan for the full range of abilities within their group. As a result, pupils in these classes make more rapid progress; however, this does not yet make up for the lack of progress they have made over time.

The gaps are not known between the progress made by other pupils and those eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils), disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This is because, historically, leaders and managers have not rigorously analysed assessment information. As a consequence, current leaders do not know how well these pupils are doing, and so are not able to quickly respond if they fall behind. Interventions to support disadvantaged pupils are planned, but actions to evaluate the impact of these are limited because poor-quality information regarding pupils' starting points means that targets set are often inappropriate and are not challenging enough.

In the majority of classes, the most-able pupils are not challenged in their learning. As a result, they are not making the progress of which they are capable.

With the support of the local authority advisers and members of the interim executive board, you have raised the expectations of staff to plan for better-focused learning opportunities. Particular improvement is evident in the early years provision, where there are significant developments in the inside space. The reorganisation of the classroom environment is supporting children to work more independently and some are making positive choices of their own. However, there is currently very little recording of the progress children make in their learning, and leaders are not confident it is accurate.

### **The quality of teaching**

The school's new single plan identifies how leaders will support teachers to develop their skills, including those of planning to meet the particular learning needs of all pupils. However, due to the short time you have spent in the school thus far, little of this work has been completed so there is not yet evidence of its impact.

Because, historically, leaders have not challenged poor teaching, there has been little improvement. Since you have taken up post, the rigorous actions you have taken have resulted in some small improvements in the quality of teaching. However, there is still little that is good and much that requires further improvement.

Teachers in Year 1 share planning for their classes. The impact of this improved quality planning is that they deepen learning. However, this is not consistent in all classes, and some poor planning to meet the ability levels of different pupils remains. Pupils always know what they have to do to complete a task but cannot always explain what they are learning or what is expected of them. For example, in an English lesson, pupils were asked to modify a paragraph to improve it, but many of them made it worse even though they met the teacher's expectations. As a consequence, pupils' progress stalled. Pupils do not always know what the good piece of work they are expected to produce looks like.

The effective use of questioning to support and challenge learning in mathematics is evident in some, but not all, classes. High-quality resources for the teaching of mathematics have been purchased and are being used by teaching staff to better support learning. However, teachers' knowledge of the breadth of approaches necessary for the teaching of mathematics is not always evident. In too many lessons, work is based around repeated worksheets and pupils' progress slows as they wait for adult support. Recent positive changes to teaching staff are very new and so are too recent to have had an impact on pupils' progress.

Pupils are often overly reliant on adult help and are not always supported to develop resilience or to make choices independently because teaching assistants have not received the necessary training or guidance to enable them to support pupils effectively.

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

The behaviour of pupils is not yet good because pupils' behaviour for learning does not enable them to make good progress. Pupils nearly always try to do as they are asked but there are occasions when the behaviour of a few disturbs the learning of others in their class. Pupils say this happens too often. The very recent rise in expectations has started to have an impact on behaviour and pupils are beginning to listen to more carefully and respond more quickly to instructions from adults.

Pupils have a clear understanding of different types of bullying. They understand the reasons why people might get bullied. However, behaviour on the playground and in the dining hall is a concern because pupils say it is at these times that bullying happens. Where staff are available to support specific activities, pupils feel safe and play well together. An example of this is in the indoor football arena, where staff coach mixed teams in a safe and inclusive environment.

The behaviour management system is not well understood by all pupils and is not consistently used by all staff. As a result, pupils exploit the differences and their behaviour is not good. It is an overly complicated system, and it is currently under review. The logging of behaviour incidents often records a description of what happened but does not record why the incident happened, the trigger for the behaviour or what is now in place to improve this. This lack of detail and measurement means that there is no analysis of the behaviour of pupils and, consequently, there are no clear strategies to support individual pupils to improve their behaviour. While staff believe there has been a recent improvement, there is no information to support this view.

The single central register shows that the appropriate checks have been undertaken for staff's suitability to work with children. The recording of the attendance of pupils is inaccurate. These inaccuracies are currently being investigated by the local authority and the outcomes of this will be considered at my next visit.

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

Historically, strategic leadership has been weak. Leaders were slow to acknowledge that the school's performance was not good enough and so no effective remedial actions were taken. With support of the interim executive board, you and other leaders have acted with urgency to ensure that plans are implemented and reviewed regularly. This has increased the pace of improvement. While there have been many areas which need immediate attention, you have rightly identified appropriate priorities and have allocated responsibilities so that, alongside the recent positive developments in school, there has also been a focus on the transition to academy status.

The interim executive board has appropriately used the sponsoring academy to support the development of leadership and management. Staff say that there has been an improvement in morale since your arrival and that they have a renewed confidence in the direction of the school. It is evident that the direction you are providing is starting to bring about the improvement required.

Although you and other leaders have an improved knowledge of pupils' attainment, systems for checking the quality of the school's work are underdeveloped. Too little observation of teaching has taken place and, until recently, it has not focused enough on pupils' learning to identify the barriers to their progress.

Performance review of teachers has not previously been effectively managed and the targets set for staff have not always been inclusive of all pupils. Along with members of the interim executive board, you are reviewing this, and recent lesson observations are being used to identify areas which require development. New targets are more sharply focused on the impact teaching has on the achievement of individual classes and groups of pupils. Teachers are responding to the new ideas and opportunities you are offering them. In particular, the newly qualified teachers say they value the visits that have been arranged to other schools to see good and outstanding practice in literacy and mathematics.

## **External support**

With the support of the local authority, the interim executive board appropriately carried out the task of seeking an academy sponsor. The school is being effectively supported by the multi-academy trust and the beginnings of shared practice can be seen particularly in English and mathematics, with shared strategies and support for teachers.

The local authority has offered high-quality support and appropriately targeted its challenge. Recent support has been well matched to the needs of the school and has been strengthened by the work of the academy trust.