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Maureen Okoye
Executive Headteacher
Acacia Nursery
Cecil Road
London
E11 3HF

Dear Mrs Okoye

Special measures monitoring inspection of Acacia Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 8 May 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 nursery's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the nursery became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior leaders from Acacia Nursery and Davies Lane School, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. Brief visits were made to the classrooms and outdoor learning areas. I reviewed a range of documentation including safeguarding information and a sample of children's work. The local authority statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection, there have been significant changes to the nursery. The interim headteacher left following the inspection. The executive headteacher from Davies Lane School, part of a teaching school alliance, took responsibility for the school's leadership on 23 February. She is supported by senior leaders and specialist leaders in education (SLE) seconded from the Davies Lane and Selwyn School Federation. Three agency nursery officers and one agency teacher left the school. Consultation is underway for Acacia Nursery to join the Davies Lane and Selwyn Schools' Federation from 1 June 2015.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since 23 February, the executive headteacher and her senior leadership team have initiated significant improvements within a short time. They work closely with staff and parents who have confidence in senior leaders' ability to bring about the required changes to the nursery.

Leaders prioritised addressing urgent health and safety concerns to ensure children's safety. For example, external fencing was repaired, a deep, disused sandpit was removed and unsafe climbing equipment has been decommissioned. The internal and external learning environments have been refurbished. Internal partitions have been taken away to improve staff visibility and supervision. A safeguarding audit to check staff suitability to work with children has been completed. This monitoring inspection confirms that safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

In addition senior leaders reviewed teaching and learning. This identified adults' lack of confidence in key areas, notably assessment, planning and behaviour management. Leaders organised individual and whole-school professional development. This included training, co-planning and team teaching using resources and staff expertise from the federation. Initial feedback confirms that this intensive support has improved practice; however, there is still much to do. Brief visits to the provision during the monitoring inspection showed adults meeting children's needs and interests; however, assessment practice is underdeveloped. Adults do not routinely assess children's achievement or plan appropriate next steps in their learning. Leaders acknowledge this weakness. A new system to track children's progress indicates that too many children are not making the progress they should particularly the most able and those who speak English as an additional language.

The school improvement plan clearly links all actions to the priorities identified in the last inspection. It includes appropriate milestones and success criteria to evaluate progress. There is separation of responsibility between the person leading the action and those responsible for monitoring its impact.

Governors' strategic function is weak. They acknowledge that they have overseen the school's rapid decline into special measures and they have been neglectful of children's health and safety. Since the inspection they have attended training, visited the nursery more frequently and held meetings with parents to seek their views about the proposed hard federation. Governors do not yet fully understand how to fulfil their roles and responsibilities efficiently in monitoring school improvement. The role of the local authority has been pivotal in brokering the leadership of the Davies Lane and Selwyn School Federation which has driven effective improvement

to the nursery since it became subject to special measures. The statement of action is focused and refers appropriately to the key issues. The local authority has strengthened the governing body through the addition of experienced governors and by relieving them of their duties for the children's centre.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

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

The school's improvement plans are fit for purpose.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono

Her Majesty's Inspector