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24 November 2015

Mr D Aldworth  
Interim headteacher  
Jakeman Nursery School  
Jakeman Road  
Balsall Heath  
Birmingham  
B12 9NX

Dear Mr Aldworth

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Jakeman Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 November 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 March 2015. 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

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

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 Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2015**

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - raising adults' expectations of what children can learn
  - providing more challenge when children choose their own activities, for example by asking searching questions to move learning on to higher levels
  - planning in greater detail what it is that adults want children to learn from their exploration and investigation and making sure that they help children learn more
  - improving the accuracy of day-to-day assessments of children's learning and use this to build on what children have already learned using a wider range of resources, including technology, to support children's learning through exploration and investigation.
  
- Increase the pace at which children learn so that all groups of pupils attain the levels they are capable of reaching, in particular:
  - improving children's skills in finding things out for themselves through improving their ability to stay focused and concentrate on activities for longer periods.
  
- To improve leadership and management, the governing body should make sure there is a strong senior leadership team with the skills to:
  - improve the quality of education provided at the nursery
  - ensure that all key areas of leadership and management are covered, with leaders carrying out regular plans for improvement and monitoring their impact
  - make regular checks on teaching to ensure it is improving
  - rapidly develop and implement rigorous systems to check that different groups of children are making equally good progress
  - ensure that both the indoor and outside learning areas meet all requirements for early years learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 November 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and other school staff, the interim executive board, the school improvement partner and a representative from the local authority. The inspector spoke to children during learning activities and talked to parents as they brought their children to school.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit, the local authority has exercised its powers to replace the governing body with an interim executive board (IEB). The substantive headteacher has not returned to the school. The school continues to be led by an interim headteacher, who is also the headteacher of Shenley Fields Nursery School, and an interim deputy headteacher. A second interim deputy headteacher joined the school in September. She has taken responsibility for coordinating the provision for disabled children and those who have special educational needs. The headteacher of Allen's Croft Nursery School provides leadership support to the school in the role of school improvement partner.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Systems for measuring children's progress are at an early stage of implementation. As a result, there is little evidence of the extent to which outcomes for children are improving. However, staff have built a broadly accurate picture of the skills children had when they started at the nursery this September. This information shows the majority of the children cannot communicate as well as most three-year-olds. Many are unable to make their needs known and lack sufficient confidence to talk to adults. Quite a few find it difficult to play with others because they do not readily share or take turns. Staff have recognised these weaknesses and adapted their planning accordingly. This is beginning to make a difference for some children. Some have settled in well. They are growing in confidence and are becoming more aware of the needs of other children. However, quite a number are not developing these skills quickly enough because weaknesses in the quality of teaching persist.

Children are beginning to show that they can sustain concentration when something captures their interest. When given the opportunity, children show high levels of curiosity and enjoy finding things out for themselves, such as the group that was trying to build a tepee. The children came up with a number of different ideas which they tried out and talked about enthusiastically. However, opportunities like these are still too infrequent, so children's imagination and their desire to investigate often go unchannelled.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Staff have been given appropriate opportunities for training and development. Many have embraced these chances enthusiastically and their practice is improving as a result. Not all staff have taken advice on board as successfully. Some are still struggling to implement new ideas. A few are reluctant to let go of old ways of working. As a result, improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is still too variable, leading to inconsistent improvement in children's outcomes.

Senior staff guide nursery officers and teaching assistants to adapt planning for different groups of pupils. This intention meets with varying degrees of success. Staff are beginning to consider how to make the suggested activities more or less demanding, but this differentiation is not effective enough to meet the needs of individual children.

Some adults are effective at helping children develop their communication and social skills. This is why some children have settled in quickly and are growing in confidence. The proportion of appropriately skilled adults is increasing. A sizeable proportion of children still struggle to make their needs known, or to use language as part of learning. This is sometimes because adults do not expect or support children to speak clearly or correctly. For example, adults sometimes ignore opportunities to help children learn basic English vocabulary, such as the names of objects or numbers. Some adults do not use correct English themselves when speaking to children. This does not provide a good example for children to follow.

Some adults are asking better questions of children and give them time to think. When this happens, children are able to express ideas and use their thinking to increase understanding. However, sometimes adults bombard children with too many low-level questions without giving time for them to respond. This stifles children's capacity to make sense of lessons.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

When children arrive at school in the morning, they are greeted with cheery smiles by their key workers. Well-established routines help children settle quickly in their groups and get started on the day's activities. Most children are keen to come to school. A few find it difficult to say goodbye to their parents and become upset when it is time for Mum or Dad to leave. Staff are becoming more skilled at dealing with these situations so most children settle as the morning progresses.

Children generally behave well in school. They follow instructions and are beginning to take responsibility for their own actions. Most are learning to share and take

turns. Sometimes adults do not spot when an opportunity arises to reinforce these behaviours, for example by not correcting a child who snatches a toy from another.

Procedures for ensuring children are kept safe have been further refined since the section 5 inspection in March. For example, plans for checking the suitability of staff to work with children have been strengthened. In the past, some information was not recorded correctly in the single central register of staff. Omissions in recording evidence checked about staff identities have not been challenged by the local authority and so had not been eradicated until recently. Leaders have now taken action to rectify these omissions and prevent future occurrences.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

Between March and April, the interim headteacher was the only qualified teacher in the school. He secured the services of another qualified teacher in April and a second qualified teacher from September. These two qualified teachers are now the two part-time interim deputy headteachers. Between the three senior leaders, all essential leadership functions are now covered. Securing this degree of expertise has taken considerable effort from the interim headteacher and former governing body. As a result of this unavoidably slow start, it is only since September that leadership has had the capacity to focus on driving improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Given that short time, the rate of improvement is reasonable.

Most staff are positive about the changes in school this year. They value the investment made in the classrooms and say this has resulted in a much-improved working environment. Many staff report that they are kept well informed by leaders about the changes taking place. A few, however, do not feel their views are always taken into account when decisions are made. Parents who spoke to the inspector say they are happy with developments this year and that the school is improving.

Since September the school has been governed by an interim executive board (IEB), consisting of three members who were appointed by the Department for Education. In a short time, the IEB has identified the short-, medium- and long-term issues facing the school. A stable senior leadership team, comprising the interim headteacher and two part-time deputy headteachers, is now in place. These arrangements have been secured for at least the duration of this academic year. The IEB is working closely with Birmingham City Council to seek long-term stability in leadership and to determine the future structure of the school.

One reason why the quality of teaching is improving quite slowly is that children's progress is not central to the action plan. While the plan is generally fit for purpose, it includes insufficient measures by which the headteacher can hold staff to account for the quality of their work. In turn, this limits the degree to which the IEB can

measure the rate of improvement or evaluate whether it is happening quickly enough.

Senior leaders and the IEB are realistic about what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching. The new senior leadership team has accurately identified where teaching is best and where weaknesses remain. They have established a programme of coaching which is beginning to lead to better teaching. Nevertheless, improvement is tentative and inconsistent because leaders have not been able to ensure all staff still have the necessary skills to ensure children learn well. As a result, some children are learning well in some activities, but this is by no means true for all.

Leadership capacity has been stretched by the need to be involved in strategic discussions about the school's future and the time needed to create a leadership team. This has reduced the time available to the headteacher and deputy headteachers to monitor the impact of training for teachers or to take further action where improvement is not happening quickly enough. This is one reason why the quality of teaching remains patchy. The interim headteacher and deputy headteachers demonstrate that they have the skills necessary to improve teaching quality, but have been frustrated in their efforts to do so due to lack of time.

To this point, leaders' and the local authority's judgements about the quality of teaching have been made through formal, pre-arranged lesson observations. While this approach enables staff to demonstrate their teaching potential, it does not take into account how well teaching skills are applied on a day-to-day basis and does not relate the quality of teaching to whether or not children are making enough progress.

## **External support**

There is much confusion about the responsibility of external agencies for different aspects of school improvement. For example, until recently it was not known whether the school is eligible for support from the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), which is the organisation contracted to provide school improvement services on behalf of the city council. An officer from BEP has now visited the school, but this involvement is at an early stage of development. Prior to the section 5 inspection in March, the local authority brokered time from the school improvement partner to provide leadership support. There is a lack of clarity around the purpose of this role. Consequently, its impact is limited.

The human resources team from the local authority continues to work closely with the school to address remaining issues related to staffing. This support is valued. The local authority meets frequently with the IEB to discuss progress and work towards securing long-term stable leadership. The school improvement partner has

supported leaders in carrying out observations of learning and identifying next steps for staff to improve their teaching. The local authority is providing a degree of challenge to the IEB through monthly meetings.

At the time of the previous monitoring visit, the statement of action, prepared by the local authority, was judged not to be fit for purpose. This was, in large part, because it did not state what steps the local authority would take to ensure the school achieves rapid, sustainable improvement. The statement has been revised in conjunction with the school's action plan. While weaknesses in the action plan remain, the two documents do now meet basic requirements.