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

Dear Ms Okoye

Special measures monitoring inspection of Acacia Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 29 and 30 September 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 January 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 school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and the 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Waltham Forest.

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection in January 2015

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - working in partnership with the local authority to secure effective full-time leadership of the school and its long-term future
 - providing training for all those in senior leadership roles to enable them to take the school forward more robustly
 - ensuring that those who lead and work with disabled children and those with special educational needs have the skills and resources necessary for them to make good progress
 - developing an effective tracking system that gives an accurate picture of children's progress, and use the information to write a sharply focused development plan to raise children's achievement
 - all children receive their full entitlement to 15 hours free education
 - meeting the Early Years statutory requirements for children to participate in engaging experiences across all the areas of learning indoors and outdoors.

- Improve the quality of teaching by all staff:
 - having a clear and consistent understanding of the most effective ways in which children of this age learn
 - providing engaging activities that help children to develop high standards of behaviour and good attitudes to learning and to help them to be creative, make decisions, solve problems and explore the world around them
 - making frequent checks to identify exactly what children know and can do and use the information to develop the next steps to speed up learning for all children, but especially the most able.
 - making clear in all their planning what children are to gain from different activities
 - increasing their knowledge of how to support disabled children and those with special educational needs or who speak English as an additional language more effectively. Implement the decisions taken that give these children more effective support promptly
 - making full use of time throughout each session to extend children's learning
 - use snack time more effectively to help the development of children's social skills.

- Raise children's achievements by:
 - integrating reading, writing and mathematical skills into a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities
 - developing children's spoken language so that they can communicate effectively
 - offering activities that challenge the most able children to achieve in line with their potential
 - providing more opportunities for those who speak English as an additional language to play and learn in their own language.

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 29 and 30 September 2015

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, senior leaders and staff from Acacia Nursery, members of the federated governing body and a representative of the local authority. Visits were made to classrooms and outdoor learning areas. I reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding information and a sample of children's work.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, the governing body has been disbanded and Acacia Nursery is formally reconstituted within the Davies Lane and Selwyn School Federation. The executive headteacher is responsible for all three schools. Specialist leaders for inclusion, teaching and learning, and an interim head of school are seconded to Acacia Nursery from within the federation. One senior leader remains on sick leave. Two members of the assistant staff team have left.

Outcomes for children

During the summer term, you and your team worked closely with staff to address low expectations and poor practice. Most adults responded well to this input, resulting in children making rapid progress in a short time. Performance information for leaving children last year indicates that most made expected progress and achieved well, so they were better prepared for transfer to Reception classes.

Children currently in the nursery now routinely develop their language and social skills effectively because staff understand how to provide learning opportunities that are more exciting. The staff interact meaningfully with children, using questions to deepen their knowledge and understanding or to follow a line of enquiry. As a result, during my visit, children's achievement in mathematics, speaking and listening, and in their personal development skills, was promoted well. Indoors, children confidently showed their knowledge of numbers, some accurately counting to 12. Outdoors, an adult modelled suitable vocabulary to help children explore the speed and direction of hoops rolling down a slope.

I scrutinised children's English, mathematics and project books with you. These show that the Early Years statutory requirements are now met across all the areas of learning indoors and outdoors. Adults have sharpened their assessment practice and record children's comments to show their understanding of a particular concept. However, we agreed that some evidence is not particularly useful, such as posed photographs of children. Further development is required to help staff gather and

then use significant assessment information to plan the next steps in children's learning.

We observed children choosing to talk together in their home languages, but adults do not actively encourage children to have access to different texts in their mother tongue as well as English. This limits opportunities to develop their language skills.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

It is evident that leaders have focused on improving the quality of teaching for three-year-old children through comprehensive professional development. Most influential is exemplar teaching and learning modelled by the interim head of school. Staff observe these sessions and agree with senior leaders strategies to apply with their key group. In my discussions with the staff team, it is clear that they are receptive to constructive feedback from senior staff and committed to improving their teaching. They now have a clearer understanding of how children of this age learn as a direct result of this support.

During my visit, adults' questioning skills helped children to solve problems and make decisions. For example, one adult expertly engaged children in sustained role play using large construction tiles to make a car with doors. Each child contributed ideas to make a sturdy structure and any minor disagreements were resolved amicably.

Leaders have not yet focused on improving practice in the two-year-old provision. This is weaker. Most children who started three weeks ago have settled in smoothly, reflecting the care and support staff provide. However, children's needs are diverse; many have speech and language delay, others have physical or medical conditions. The quality of resources available on the first day of my visit was poor, with little that excited or stimulated children to learn. Some adults did not talk to children or take note of what they knew and could do in order to plan meaningful learning. Senior leaders, governors and staff acknowledge that improving the quality of teaching for the youngest children is an urgent priority.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The nursery is calm because the learning activities encourage children to show sustained interest and concentration. They show positive attitudes to their work, listen well and take turns in key group sessions. Children trust the adults who work with them to form strong relationships.

All staff, leaders and governors take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. They have attended training in safeguarding, paediatric first aid and the 'Prevent' strategy, which helps them to be alert to signs of radicalisation and extremism. A

national speaker talked to the federation team about the illegal practice of female genital mutilation (FGM).

All children receive their full entitlement to 15 hours' free education, which was an area for improvement at the time of the full inspection in January 2015. The federation has invested in a wide range of additional services to support families, such as an outreach worker, speech therapy sessions and a school-based social worker. Families in need who find attendance problematic receive intensive support. I scrutinised a case study that showed a child's attendance had increased by 7% in one term because the parent was sensitively assisted to overcome personal matters.

Parents I spoke to at the start of the day were very appreciative of the support they receive and they all told me how much their child enjoys coming to school. I observed the start to the day and agree. All children separated readily from their parent, eagerly running off to get on with their learning in a safe environment.

Effectiveness of leadership and management of the school

The executive headteacher, together with interim senior leaders, has established clear focus and direction. Much improvement has happened in a short time. Children are calmer and achieving more academically and socially because adults help them to learn in more interesting ways so that they do not become bored and noisy. Staff receive regular coaching and supervision with leaders; this helps them to understand and act quickly on feedback. The quality of teaching has improved further since my last visit because the executive headteacher drives improvements with rigour and purpose.

Leaders continue to manage the nursery's resources to meet its current priorities. The timing of the afternoon session has been adjusted to facilitate staff planning together. Children with complex needs are ably supported by a trained adult in undisturbed and highly focused one-to-one sessions in a dedicated area. Adults' strengths are deployed strategically across the setting, but expectations between the two-year-old and three-year-old provision are too variable.

Senior leaders track children's progress effectively. This provides a useful overview of children's achievement but the system lacks detail about the performance of different groups, such as those who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

Governance has been strengthened because new members bring experience or local knowledge about the nursery. Although only two formal meetings have occurred since the governing body was reconstituted, governors are clear about current priorities. They have carried out monitoring visits and they use this information to challenge leaders about the impact of their work. For example, they identified inconsistencies in the two-year-old provision.

External support

Since my last visit, the local authority acted swiftly to ensure that the new governors would bring a combination of experience and objectivity to the role. Regular review meetings are held to check the work of the school. An assigned school improvement consultant provides intensive and insightful support for the nursery.