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29 March 2016

Mr D Aldworth
Jakeman Nursery School
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Birmingham
West Midlands
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Dear Mr Aldworth

Special measures monitoring inspection of Jakeman Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 8 March 2016, 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Executive Board, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that 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 onto 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 third monitoring inspection on 8 March 2016

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and other school staff, the interim executive board (IEB), the school improvement partner and a representative from the Birmingham Education Partnership, which is the body providing school improvement services on behalf of the local authority. The inspector spoke to children during learning activities.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, two new members have been appointed to the IEB. The headteacher has left the school. The school continues to be led by an interim headteacher, who is also the headteacher of Shenley Fields Nursery School, and two interim deputy headteachers. The headteacher of Allen's Croft Nursery School provides leadership support to the school in the role of school improvement partner. The Birmingham Education Partnership has established a series of meetings with the school to monitor the rate of improvement.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership of the school continues to improve. The IEB is now well established and has increased its membership to five. Members have been recruited for the specific skills they bring to the board. As a result, the IEB is now an effective body which skilfully combines its strategic role with an ongoing approach to monitoring how well the school is improving. This is effective governance. Therefore, I no longer consider a review of governance to be needed.

The IEB and senior leaders have gained the confidence of parents and the respect of staff. The IEB, the governors of Shenley Fields Nursery School and the local authority are working effectively together to secure strong leadership for the longer term. Consultation is underway to create a suitable and sustainable staffing structure.

Senior leaders and the IEB have established a culture of higher expectations for what children can learn, and are putting in place the necessary components to ensure that children can make good progress. Staff now understand that they are responsible for children's progress and accept that their teaching needs to improve. Since the previous monitoring visit, senior leaders have strengthened monitoring systems by checking the quality of teaching very frequently. This means that staff receive instant feedback and advice on how to improve their practice. An effective programme of coaching, which gives staff the opportunity to tackle any weaknesses quickly, has been implemented. This coaching programme is also helping staff

develop understanding of how children learn, and how they can use assessment information to plan activities that promote swifter progress. Most staff have now embraced the opportunity to improve. As a result, children's progress is speeding up.

The deputy headteachers have established clear systems for checking the progress made by different groups of children. The information gathered is now being used to identify children who need extra support and to check whether the extra help given is making a difference. This close checking and the improving quality of teaching are having a positive impact on children's learning.

Much work has been done on improving the indoor learning areas. Children now learn in well-organised, attractive spaces which are inviting and appropriately resourced. The design of the environment reflects the school's curriculum, which promotes learning through exploration and investigation. The neutral colour scheme and use of natural materials create a sense of purposeful calm. Improvements to the outdoor learning area are underway, but are at an earlier stage of implementation. Nevertheless, the outdoor area is now being used more effectively to support children's learning than at the time of the section 5 inspection in March 2015.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving because staff now have a better understanding of what they need to do to help children make progress. Staff believe that the children they teach can achieve well and they accept responsibility for making it happen. There is a happy buzz around the school as children and adults play and talk together.

Many children readily chatted to me during my visit and were able to make themselves understood. This shows the positive impact of the school's focus on improving children's speaking and listening skills early on in the year. Most staff appear to enjoy being with the children and show genuine interest in what children have to say. Just occasionally, an adult's body language or tone of voice suggests that they are irritated or not interested in what children are saying. When this happens, children become visibly disengaged from the activity by moving away or becoming distracted.

Staff are making better use of the available resources to interest children in learning and to support them in their investigation and play. For example, five children were seen using torches and large cardboard boxes to experience an underground adventure. They used their imagination to conjure up what it felt like to be in a damp, dark cave and to have to find their way back to the surface. This kind of learning was observed many times throughout the day.

These enjoyable experiences are beginning to lead to children making sustained progress because staff are becoming more skilled at identifying what it is they want children to learn from each activity. Staff are developing better knowledge of how to use assessment information to guide them on what children need to learn next. In addition, teaching skills are improving for many adults as a result of the effective coaching programme.

Adult-led activities observed during the visit had the greatest benefit to children's learning when the adult challenged children to think beyond the immediate experience. This was seen when an adult asked challenging questions such as 'Why do you think that is?', 'What could that be for?', 'Why not...?' and 'What if...?' However, in similar situations, adults often accepted children's low-level talk without helping to move their understanding forward.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

As a result of improved relationships between adults and children, children are now happy at school and are growing in confidence. They are keen to learn and join in activities enthusiastically.

Daily routines provide a clear structure for the day. This helps children settle in quickly in the morning and cope well with moving around the school for snack time, lunch time and home time. The organisation of lunch is much improved. Children now eat lunch in groups with their key worker. This is helping them to develop table manners and social skills.

Children behave well in school. They are learning to share, to take turns and to consider other children's feelings. This is because adults are always on the lookout for an opportunity to reinforce these skills. In one example, one boy took an object from another. The adult explained that we must not take something without asking and told the boy that his friend would now feel sad.

Children are learning to concentrate for longer periods of time. They can sit and listen to stories without interruption, and they can focus for longer periods of time on their learning experiences. This is helping to speed up the pace of their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

The increasingly accurate information gathered by senior leaders shows that children start at the school unable to communicate as well as typical three-year-olds. Many do not speak English as their first language. Many lack the confidence to talk to unfamiliar adults. Children's early reading, writing and mathematical skills are particularly weak. This picture was confirmed by my observation of the children at the previous monitoring visit. Similarly, the evidence from this visit supports the school's records which show that children are catching up fast and are likely to be operating more like typical four-year-olds by the time they leave the school and move into the Reception Year.

Children now have more opportunities to practise using the muscles in their arms and hands that are necessary to manipulate writing equipment and form letters. They are encouraged to frequently have a go at making marks on paper. Their control over pencils is improving. Most are beginning to understand that writing is used to convey meaning and that writing goes across the page from left to right.

The school's assessment information shows children's mathematical skills are still relatively weaker than other skills. Senior leaders have a plan to improve the teaching of mathematical understanding. This is still at an early stage of implementation, so it is too soon to determine the impact.

Several children have been identified as having special educational needs. One of the deputy headteachers oversees the additional support given to these children. This is helping them to make good progress and begin to catch up with their classmates. However, some staff lack confidence when teaching children who find learning difficult. As a result, some children are not making as much progress as they should.

External support

Following the previous monitoring visit, the responsibilities of different partners for school improvement were reviewed. As a result of changes made, the local authority, the Birmingham Education Partnership and the school improvement partner now have greater clarity about their roles. The local authority is working effectively with the IEB to secure the long-term stability of the school. The school improvement partner provides operational support for the interim headteacher. The Birmingham Education Partnership locality lead has established a meeting structure aimed at holding the school to account for the rate of improvement. This series of meetings provides an opportunity for the school to be challenged to demonstrate evidence of the impact of its actions. This process is still at an early stage of implementation. The notes of its first meeting show challenging questions were asked. The answers, though, appear to have been accepted too readily, without firm evidence to prove the accuracy of assertions made.