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Mr Robert Leach
Interim Headteacher
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Dear Mr Leach

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lubavitch Junior Boys School

Following my visit with Noeman Anwar, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 19 July 2017, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2016.

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

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

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 Hackney. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Murphy-Dutton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in February 2016

- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - the school curriculum is fit for purpose and meets all statutory requirements, thus preparing pupils adequately for the next stage of their education
 - weak practice in teaching is eliminated and staff are held to account for their performance
 - the role of senior and middle leaders is strengthened, to enable them to play a key part in school improvement
 - the rate at which leaders embed procedures for assessment without levels is accelerated, in order that information held by the school can be used accurately to improve outcomes for all pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching further, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and the progress they can make, particularly the most able pupils
 - ensuring that the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics are taught consistently well, including in the early years, with a particular focus on improving writing
 - using assessment information effectively to set work for pupils that is suitably difficult and which helps them to learn well
 - planning work that pupils find interesting, so that they can develop subject-specific skills and improve their attitudes to learning.
- A further review of governance should be undertaken.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 19 July 2017

Evidence

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, those responsible for governance and local authority advisers. Inspectors also met with teachers and the leader with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's action plan, assessment information and checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors reviewed work in pupils' books and visited classes in all year groups. Many of these visits were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Pupils were observed learning a range of subjects including 'Kodesh' (the Jewish studies curriculum). Inspectors met a group of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils to discuss their experiences at school. Inspectors also spoke to pupils informally during visits to classes and in the playground. Inspectors observed behaviour as pupils moved around the school and during breaktimes. Records related to safeguarding were reviewed, including policies and procedures and the single central record of pre-employment checks on staff.

Context

The local authority replaced the school's governing body with an interim executive board (IEB) in July 2016. Following a number of changes at senior leadership level, an interim headteacher was appointed in February 2017. Several teachers and members of staff have left, and others have joined the school since the last inspection.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and the IEB articulate a clear vision for the school, centred on high aspirations for all pupils. Together, they have a realistic view of the school's performance. The headteacher agrees that there is considerable work to do before the quality of teaching will be good. Nevertheless, his decisive actions mean that the school is on the right path. Leaders and the IEB do not shy away from making difficult decisions in the best interests of pupils.

Initially, difficulties in appointing skilled leaders hindered the rate of improvement. The replacement of the governing body with an IEB was a turning point. Members of the IEB use their wide-ranging skills to effect positive change. They provide the necessary stability and challenge to move the school forward. Crucially, they recruited a headteacher with the experience and expertise needed to tackle poor teaching and raise standards.

Since taking up post, the headteacher has wasted no time in identifying and

eradicating the weakest teaching. Together with the IEB, leaders have reviewed the staffing structure. This has enabled recruitment of skilled and qualified teachers who share the same high expectations. Leaders have appropriate plans to develop middle leaders, although much of this work is at an early stage.

Leaders check the quality of teaching frequently using a broad range of evidence to inform judgements. Effective support from the local authority has helped to sharpen this aspect of leaders' work. Equally, leaders have introduced suitable assessment procedures to check pupils' attainment and identify pupils at risk of falling behind. This marks an improvement from the time of the previous inspection. Leaders now have a comprehensive picture of the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. They use the information to hold teachers to account effectively.

In the past, leaders failed to set a clear direction for the curriculum. Teachers were often unsure what knowledge and skills pupils needed to learn. Some subjects were taught from time to time or not at all. This led to considerable gaps in pupils' understanding and skills. The headteacher has brought much-needed vision and clarity about the purpose and content of the curriculum. He is determined that pupils receive good-quality teaching and rich experiences in all national curriculum subjects.

Leaders have modified the timetable for the school day. The revised timetable gives greater focus on English and mathematics and ensures that pupils learn a range of subjects. Leaders have introduced new schemes of work aligned to the national curriculum. Pupils learn knowledge and skills more consistently than in the past. As a result, gaps in pupils' basic skills are closing.

The IEB has invested in new resources, including laptops and tablets, to support the teaching of computing. Pupils spoke positively about the opportunities they have to develop skills such as basic programming. The introduction of weekly physical education lessons with external coaches has increased pupils' access to sport. However, pupils said that these sessions focus mainly on ball games and they would like to try a wider range of sporting activities. Work to improve the science curriculum is under way, although it is too soon to judge its impact. Leaders are aware that the curriculum for history, geography and art remains weak. Pupils' development of specific skills and knowledge in these subjects is limited. Equally, pupils have too few opportunities to learn about faiths and cultures other than their own. Consequently, pupils are not adequately prepared for life in modern Britain or for the next stage of their education. The headteacher is considering how best to overcome this, as shown in improvement plans.

The headteacher has sought the views of parents and carers to inform leaders' actions. Parents have rightly expressed concerns about the provision for pupils who

have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the past, pupils' needs have not been identified or assessed effectively. The leadership team has suitable plans in place to rectify this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

To establish high expectations, leaders have adopted a 'hands-on' approach to developing teachers' skills. They have rightly prioritised creating a culture where staff evaluate how well their teaching helps pupils to learn. A well-thought-out programme of guidance and training underpins this work, drawing effectively on input from local authority advisers. Teachers value the guidance they receive. They feel confident asking questions and raising concerns in order to improve their practice. Although considerable work remains, leaders' actions are having a clear impact on improving teaching.

Since the previous inspection, teachers have become more ambitious for pupils. Visits to classes and work in pupils' books showed that they are no longer willing to accept poor-quality or untidy work. In part, this is because teachers now have a secure understanding of the standards pupils are expected to reach for their age, particularly in writing.

New schemes of work for mathematics and English ensure that teachers plan tasks which help pupils develop basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are beginning to use assessment information to plan work matched to pupils' abilities. However, this approach is not embedded. Teachers do not routinely adapt activities to meet the different needs of groups of pupils. The most able pupils often complete tasks which lack suitable challenge and this hinders their progress. Pupils who have special educational needs/or disabilities receive limited support or guidance to help them learn as well as their peers. Leaders recognise that this is a key barrier to raising the quality of teaching and have made it a priority for improvement.

The teaching of mathematics provides pupils with a sound grounding in arithmetic skills. The new curriculum ensures that teaching covers a range of key mathematical concepts, including fractions, shape and measure. Teachers now plan sequences of activities to help pupils build progressively on their existing knowledge and skills. However, teaching gives insufficient emphasis to the development of pupils' problem-solving skills. Pupils have limited opportunities to attempt tasks which deepen their knowledge or make them think hard about mathematics. Consequently, pupils' achievement is not as strong as it could be.

The teaching of writing is improving. Teachers plan tasks that capture pupils' interests and motivate them to try different styles of writing. For example, in Year

2, pupils confidently wrote a report on their recent visit to a local park. Teachers now expect pupils to apply their knowledge of English grammar and punctuation to improve the quality of their writing. Equally, younger pupils, including children in the Reception class, make good use of their phonics skills to record their ideas and spell words correctly. However, poorly developed handwriting skills prevent many pupils from producing writing of the standard expected for their age. At the same time, leaders recognise that pupils need more opportunities to develop and apply their writing skills in subjects other than English.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils enjoy school and confirm that they feel safe. They report that bullying is rare. Pupils typically behave sensibly in the classroom and the playground. They are confident that adults will help them if they are worried and will deal with any issues sensitively and fairly.

The previous inspection identified that pupils did not take enough pride in their learning. Work in pupils' books shows that this is no longer the case. Pupils have responded quickly to teachers' higher expectations. They take care to present their work neatly and typically try hard during lessons. Where teaching does not capture pupils' interests or provide them with suitable challenge, some pupils lose concentration or become distracted. However, pupils' learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.

As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils' attendance remains a strength. In 2016, absence rates were below national figures. Very few pupils are persistently absent from school, reflecting the value pupils place on their education.

Outcomes for pupils

Although pupils are making better progress than they have done in the past, their outcomes remain variable. Work in books shows that many pupils have significant ground to make up in order to fully overcome their previous underachievement.

In the 2016 statutory assessments, the proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving age-related standards was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in key stage 1, too few pupils achieved the expected standards when compared with their peers nationally.

Better quality teaching means standards in key stage 1 are rising. Assessment information suggests that current Year 2 pupils are on track to achieve higher

standards than the previous cohort, particularly in reading and mathematics. Pupils' outcomes in the Year 1 phonics check have also improved. The school's information indicates that the proportion of pupils attaining the required standard is now broadly in line with that of other schools.

Across the school, the small number of disadvantaged pupils typically achieve as well as their peers. However, not all groups of pupils achieve equally well, particularly the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's assessment information suggests that the proportion of current Year 2 pupils attaining the highest standards is above the national average, particularly in reading. This pattern of strong achievement is not evident throughout the school. Leaders recognise that teaching does not typically challenge the most able pupils to achieve to the very best of their abilities. Equally, the lack of routine support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities means that they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Children in the early years make a positive start to their education, particularly in the development of their basic reading, writing and mathematical skills. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is above the national average. However, as in other year groups, teaching does not routinely challenge children and this limits their progress.

External support

The local authority's effective support has steered the school well through challenging times. Advisers recognised that the school required intensive intervention and guidance to secure improvement. They took decisive action to tackle weaknesses in leadership through the appointment of the IEB. Local authority advisers and the IEB have worked together constructively to resolve complex issues related to finance, human resources and staff recruitment. As a result, the leadership team has been able to remain focused on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Local authority advisers visit the school frequently to support leaders. They have set ambitious targets and ask challenging questions about the progress leaders are making. This helps leaders to evaluate the impact of their work and prioritise further actions.

Advisers provide a range of well-targeted guidance and training for teachers. For example, they work with teachers in the classroom to model effective practice. At the same time, the local authority has helped leaders establish an accurate baseline of pupils' knowledge and skills. As well as checking end-of-key-stage assessments, advisers have helped teachers to assess pupils' writing carefully using the national frameworks.

The local authority recognises that the headteacher's appointment has been pivotal in helping the school to improve. It understands that the school now has greater

capacity to drive improvements for itself. Even so, the IEB and local authority acknowledge the need for a smooth transition to academy status, so that the momentum for improvement is not lost. This includes securing permanent leadership arrangements at headteacher level.