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Brian Bench
Hungerford Primary School and Children's Centre
Hungerford Road
Islington
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Dear Mr Bench

Special measures monitoring inspection of Hungerford Primary School and Children's Centre

Following my visit with James Hollinsley, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 19–20 September 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 March 2017.

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 not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Islington. This letter will be

published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Noeman Anwar
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.

- Carry out a thorough review of leadership and management across the school to ensure that:
 - all leaders are fully equipped with the necessary experience to bring about rapid improvement in the school's work
 - the school's vision for improvement is well planned and conveyed to staff
 - the curriculum is well organised and covers all subjects in the national curriculum
 - leaders consistently monitor, evaluate and report on the spending and impact of the pupil premium and the physical education and sports funding.
- Develop teaching, learning and the use of assessment so that all teachers meet the government's teachers' standards, and ensure that pupils in all year groups make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the attendance of those pupils with high rates of persistent absence.
- Improve the quality of provision in the early years foundation stage by:
 - using assessment information carefully to match activities to children's needs
 - providing children with regular and planned opportunities to develop their reading, writing and language skills
 - providing children with challenging self-selected activities that stimulate and develop their thinking.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 19 September 2017 to 20 September 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the attendance leader, a behaviour consultant, the special educational needs coordinator, members of staff, the chair of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and the chief executive officer of the academy sponsor. A telephone conversation with the head of school improvement from the local authority took place. Inspectors visited all classrooms and observed learning alongside senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. The school's single central record and other documents related to safeguarding were scrutinised. Inspectors talked with pupils in their classrooms and during social times. Inspectors talked to parents about their views of the school.

Context

The leadership team has remained consistent since the previous inspection. The chair of governors resigned and a new chair was elected. The school has appointed a home-school liaison worker who leads on attendance. Following the previous inspection, there was a great deal of turbulence among teaching staff. Several teachers left the school. The school struggled to recruit staff for September and has a mix of substantive and supply staff. Some teachers currently employed are on short-term contracts.

Some roles and responsibilities among the leadership team have changed. For example, the designated safeguarding lead is now the assistant headteacher. She is supported by the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher.

The local authority has provided hands-on support. The head of school improvement has worked closely with the school. He has brokered a range of support from the local authority and a local school.

Plans for the school to become an academy sponsored by the Bridge London Trust have recently been approved. A date of conversion, January 2018, has been proposed. The school plans to undertake a restructure of the leadership arrangements and appoint a new head of school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Due to intensive support by the local authority, senior leaders have managed to take important initial steps to remedy previous weaknesses. Leaders now have a clear strategic calendar to monitor the effectiveness of changes. Leaders are better at monitoring specific areas of the school through targeted observation and scrutiny of pupils' work. The school is mostly accurate in its self-evaluation. External

consultants provide leaders with most of the strategic direction for further improvement. The local authority directs consultants from within the borough to aid with leadership development.

A new behaviour policy is beginning to make a difference. The support of a behaviour consultant from a local school has been invaluable to ensure consistency. Teachers and pupils speak positively about the 'stay on green' approach. Pupils typically respond well to the new approach to behaviour in class. However, on many occasions, low-level disruption by pupils continues to be an issue in classes and on the playground.

There have been significant changes to the school's curriculum. Leaders have ensured that a new scheme is now in place, which covers the wider subjects of the national curriculum. The teaching of reading has been a priority. Leaders have followed advice from the local authority and implemented a new approach to the teaching of reading. Timetable changes ensure regular reading slots for pupils during the morning. In the past, reading lessons took place in the afternoons and were often disrupted by poor behaviour.

The recruitment of a new attendance lead is beginning to make a difference. In the past, a lack of trust between some parents and leaders resulted in poor communication with the most vulnerable families. The identification of persistently absent pupils is now much clearer. Initial meetings between the attendance lead and some parents have started. These meetings have built up trust and allowed the home-school worker to understand barriers to poor attendance. However, procedures are at an early stage of development.

Plans for the school's transition to academy status have progressed rapidly. The local authority has been working closely with the academy trust. They plan to work closely beyond the transition and make use of the expertise that currently supports the school. As a result, long-term plans for the school's improvement show sustainability. The trust has worked proactively to set up a school improvement board. The board will include a number of successful educational experts with a broad range of experiences.

Parents are anxious about the school's future direction. They are tentative about the school becoming an academy but recognise that change is required. Most of the parents talked to speak negatively about the school. In particular, they are frustrated at the changes in teaching staff and the effect on their children's progress.

Staff understand the school's priorities. They have attempted to embrace changes and notice some positive differences. For example, staff are much clearer on safeguarding procedures. However, they feel overwhelmed by what they see as 'too many changes'. Staff feel that leaders are available to provide support, but often state that this is limited. As a result, morale among staff is low.

The new chair of governors is accurate in his evaluation of the school's priorities. He has ensured that governor committee meetings have continued. A greater focus on safeguarding has resulted in all staff now being trained according to the latest guidance. Governors are now much more proactive in setting agenda items for meetings.

An external review of governance and pupil premium has not taken place. This decision was due to the proposals for transition to academy status being successful and the local authority providing regular support.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Due to the significant changes in staffing at the end of last year, many staff are new. As a result, leaders have not had enough time to make a difference to the quality of teaching and learning.

In the early years, children engage well with their learning and receive adequate support. Children have settled well and are beginning to form good relationships with their peers. Staff are vigilant and interact positively with the children. Children use a range of learning prompts independently. For example, one girl was counting beads and placing them in order on a board. A boy took an interest in the book corner and enjoyed looking through a book by himself. He was able to talk confidently about his own experiences that related to the book.

The quality of teaching and learning in key stages 1 and 2 is highly inconsistent. In some lessons, teachers use good questioning to engage pupils and deepen their learning. However, too often, teachers set work that is not well matched to pupils' different abilities. Some pupils told inspectors that the work is too easy. Others struggle in class with tasks that are too difficult. For example, in a geography lesson, the majority of pupils struggled to read the key vocabulary required. As a result, pupils' progress is limited.

The teaching of reading is at an early stage. Staff introduce new vocabulary as part of 'word of the day' and the new guided reading plan. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to discuss the meanings of new words. Much of the early work involves developing initial reading skills. Pupils enjoy listening to stories and are able to reflect on their own views about books. However, the development of inference and deduction skills is limited. There is an over-reliance on using dictionaries to understand unfamiliar words in a text. Consequently, pupils' abilities to comprehend challenging texts are limited.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. The number of serious behaviour incidents has reduced. A new behaviour system is making a difference. Staff and pupils

agree that this is the case. There is a greater emphasis on positive behaviour. For example, pupils are encouraged to solve problems by reflecting and discussing their behavioural choices. However, this is not consistently applied by staff.

During the inspection, behaviour varied across different classes. In some lessons, pupils demonstrate calm and purposeful attitudes. They are respectful to each other and work collaboratively to complete tasks. Teachers in these classes have built positive working relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils listen well and work quietly. However, in too many classes, low-level disruption still exists. Teachers manage behaviour inconsistently and at times shout. Pupils in these lessons are off-task and loud while working. This limits their understanding of work that is set.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive support that varies in quality. In some lessons, adults involve them in the learning activities and value their views. They interact well with the teaching assistants, who support them adequately. However, in other lessons, the support does not match their needs. This is typically due to work set that is too difficult to complete. Pupils in these lessons are isolated and refuse to complete the work.

Pupils move around the school in an orderly way. At times, they can be loud and need constant reminders from adults about expectations. Staff refer consistently to the school values while giving reminders. Breaktimes and playtimes are well supervised. Pupils have opportunities to use equipment, such as skipping ropes and colouring sheets. However, there are times when some pupils' behaviour can be boisterous and argumentative. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is much better than it used to be and that there are fewer fights compared to last year.

Rates of absence and persistent absence remain high. There are clear plans to improve procedures. However, these are at the early stages.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils' attainment and progress rose at the end of key stage 2 in 2017. Pupils' progress, including disadvantaged pupils, showed improvement in writing and mathematics compared to 2016. Although attainment rose in reading, progress is still below the national standard. Attainment at the end of Year 1 in the national phonics screening check also rose. However, this is likely to remain below the national average.

The work in pupils' books since the start of the year shows variability. In some classes, reflecting teachers' expectations, pupils are working at age-appropriate standards. However, the progress of the most able and lower-attaining pupils still remains inadequate. This is due to work not being appropriate to their needs.

External support

The support and challenge provided by the local authority has been highly effective. The head of school improvement has an accurate view of the school and has

successfully put in a range of support following the previous inspection. Actions taken are closely linked to weaknesses identified during the previous inspection.