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28 December 2017

Mrs Suneta Bagri and Mr Basit Ali  
Interim Headteachers  
Wilkes Green Infant School (NC)  
Antrobus Road  
Handsworth  
Birmingham  
B21 9NT

Dear Mrs Bagri and Mr Ali

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Wilkes Green Infant School (NC)**

Following my visit with Nicola Harwood, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 28–29 November 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 December 2016.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are not taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

The school's improvement plan is not 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 executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Tim Hill  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in December 2016.**

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
  - leaders have an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses
  - there are robust systems in place for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school’s work
  - school leaders make effective use of the assessment information they have to monitor pupils’ outcomes and to hold teachers to account
  - governors have a clear and realistic view of the school’s performance and fully undertake all their statutory duties
  - the approaches the school uses to promote the importance of good attendance are understood and followed by parents.
- Improve outcomes achieved by pupils at the end of Year 2 by ensuring that:
  - pupils of all abilities are enabled to make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics
  - disadvantaged pupils receive the necessary support to help them achieve in line with other pupils nationally
  - pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive support that is closely matched to their needs.
- Improve the quality of teaching so it is at least good by ensuring that teachers:
  - have high expectations of all pupils, especially the most able and the most able disadvantaged, and set appropriately challenging tasks
  - provide better opportunities for pupils to develop their spoken communication skills
  - develop pupils’ thinking skills so that they reflect more deeply on their learning
  - develop pupils’ comprehension skills so that they have a better understanding of what they have read
  - plan and deliver activities that allow pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to increasingly difficult problems.
- Improve the early years provision by developing the use of the outdoor classroom so that children are able to make independent choices and initiate their own 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 first monitoring inspection on 28 to 29 November 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes across the school. The interim headteachers accompanied inspectors to most of the observations. Inspectors looked at pupils' work and scrutinised documents. They met with the interim headteachers, a group of staff, the chair and two members of the interim executive board, three representatives from the organisation who provide school improvement support on behalf of the local authority, and a representative from Colmore Partnership Teaching School Alliance. An inspector met with a group of pupils and observed pupils during playtime and lunchtime. Inspectors listened to several pupils read.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection in December 2016, there has been significant turbulence in staffing, especially affecting senior leadership posts. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers have left the school. Just over half of all teachers have also left since the last inspection. Several other non-teaching staff have left, including the school business manager. An interim executive board (IEB) was put in place in May 2017 to replace the previous governing body. None of the former governors are part of the new board.

In February, the acting deputy headteacher on secondment from another school took on the role of interim headteacher when the substantive headteacher left. A second interim headteacher joined the school in the summer term 2017. The school currently has two interim co-headteachers.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Interim leaders have only very recently begun to address the weaknesses of the school effectively. When they took up post, the interim leaders discovered additional weaknesses in the school's policies and procedures which impacted negatively on the smooth running of the school. They set about putting in place clear processes for staff so that there was greater consistency in practice, particularly in relation to human resource matters such as staff absence and health and safety.

During the spring term, leaders spent time building staff confidence. The interim headteacher worked closely with Leigh Trust teaching school to develop an action plan. However, too much time passed before leaders really began to focus on addressing underachievement and improving the quality of teaching. Consequently, there was a further decline in standards in 2017. With the arrival of the second interim headteacher, leaders were able to gain a sharper focus on addressing underachievement and improving the quality of teaching. Jointly, the interim headteachers started to tackle weaknesses in teaching. Teachers' expectations of pupils began to rise. Since September 2017, interim leaders have been successful in

ensuring that staff are committed to making sure that the school improves quickly. Staff welcome the changes and the direction that leaders are providing.

However, leaders are trying to tackle too many areas for improvement all at once. This has resulted in overload and limited time for new initiatives to be embedded. Too many changes have been introduced too quickly, with insufficient monitoring to ensure that they have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. There has not been a cohesive, carefully planned approach to school improvement. Leaders with relatively limited headship experience have not been given enough appropriate support to manage change.

School improvement planning is complex and lacks clarity. Objectives are too broad, and approaches to monitoring and evaluation too general. Success criteria are not tightly focused with measurable outcomes linked to pupils' achievement. Action plans that sit underneath the overarching school improvement plan are more akin to task lists with no reference to how outcomes will be monitored or evaluated. Up until very recently, this was not identified by anyone supporting the school. The school's self-evaluation of its overall performance, which indicates that the school 'requires improvement' in all areas, is overgenerous and lacks rigorous evaluation. This was not challenged by those supporting the school or by the IEB.

Up until the beginning of this academic year, the school's progress in addressing most weaknesses identified at the last inspection had been too slow. School leaders, the IEB and the local authority all recognise that the school has not made sufficient improvements since it was judged inadequate almost a year ago. All accept that there is significant work to do if pupils are to achieve well. The confusion and uncertainty around the future leadership arrangements of the school have been, and continue to be, an additional barrier to this school improving rapidly. Leaders are unclear about lines of responsibility and accountability.

The monitoring of teaching and learning has improved. Leaders now more regularly see what is happening in classes and are developing an informed view about the quality of teaching. Leaders, particularly since the summer term, use this information to plan better support for teachers. However, leaders' feedback to staff is not formalised, which makes it more difficult to check whether teachers have responded to the advice given. Those supporting the school have helped leaders to verify their judgements about the impact of the quality of teaching.

The leadership of special educational needs has strengthened since the temporary appointment of an experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). She is clear about what needs doing and where the key concerns are. She has introduced an assessment and tracking system so that pupils can be identified earlier. Better partnerships with external agencies and key professionals have been established, resulting in improved support for those pupils who have significant additional needs.

Since September 2017, leaders have taken action to ensure that teachers'

assessments are more accurate. They have also revised and improved the strategic plan for supporting disadvantaged pupils. A clear system is now in place for identifying barriers to learning, in order to provide pupils with appropriate support. Teaching staff are clearer about their responsibilities for disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of governance has not been completed because the governing body was removed and replaced with an IEB. The IEB, although it has had to deal with a lot of complex staffing issues, has not been sufficiently robust in monitoring the school improvement plan. It has not paid enough attention to evaluating leaders' efforts to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. The board is small and the lion's share of the work seems to be falling on the shoulders of the chair. This limits the amount of support and challenge the board can give to the school.

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

Leaders' checks indicate that the quality of teaching is variable across the school, including too much that is less than good or inadequate. Inspectors concur with this view. This inconsistent picture means that pupils' progress is erratic and often not good, both across and within year groups. This is partly as a result of the many staff changes and improvement strategies not seen through to completion. There has been a lack of cohesiveness in addressing the areas requiring attention. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of teaching and learning that are showing some recent signs of improvement.

Evidence in pupils' books shows that leaders are expecting more of teachers. Due to stronger leadership of late, improvements in teaching and learning are starting to gather momentum. For example, pupils are beginning to experience more work in mathematics which is better matched to their ability. However, it remains the case that pupils are not given enough opportunity to apply their reasoning skills and grapple with more demanding mathematical problems. In other subjects, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are not given work which is carefully matched to their needs, particularly in reading and writing. This slows their progress. Leaders have recently introduced a new approach to develop pupils' spoken communication skills, linked to writing. This is providing more regular opportunities for pupils to engage in speaking and listening. However, it is too soon to assess the impact on all groups of pupils.

Opportunities for pupils to read regularly are limited. This is preventing middle- and lower-ability pupils from developing the fluency and understanding they need to meet age-related expectations and be well prepared for key stage 2. This is compounded by inconsistency in the frequency in which pupils' books are changed. In some instances, pupils keep the same book for over a month. The most able pupils are not well supported, and consequently the development of their comprehension is limited and they are not working at greater depth.

The Reception classes have relocated to an annex building in order to give pupils

access to a larger and more interesting outdoor space. However, this is not yet fully set up and is not yet well organised. Nor does it provide an enabling environment for children to develop independence. This inspection has found that there are more wide-ranging issues about the quality of teaching in the early years which need addressing. Inspectors recognise that staffing instability has been a contributing factor.

Overall, despite improved assessment, some teachers are still unsure about individual pupils' needs and the strategies which will help them to learn most effectively.

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

Pupils' behaviour has improved because leaders set clear expectations and staff are mostly consistent in their application of the school's behaviour policy. However, when work is less demanding or resources are not in adequate supply, some pupils drift off-task. In several classrooms, while learning was often purposeful, noise levels were too high and distracting to others. This was especially the case in the early years. Nearly all pupils display a positive attitude to their learning.

Attendance remains below national, although has improved due to clear systems and procedures which have been in place since September. There is rigorous follow-up of any absence. Leaders have worked hard to develop a shared understanding with parents about the importance of good attendance. Pupils are very clear that they need to attend school regularly. Pupils told inspectors, 'We need to be at 97% but 100% is best.' Parents are very clear that any absence will be followed up with a phone call, home visit or warning letter.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

In 2017, outcomes declined in both the early years foundation stage and key stage 1. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics remained well below national averages. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected standards in writing and mathematics fell. In reading there was a small increase. Progress of current pupils continues to vary widely, with still too many making insufficient progress from their starting points. This is due to the variability in the quality of teaching.

Due to moderation, teachers' assessments of pupils' learning are becoming more reliable. This has enabled leaders to have a more accurate overview of pupils' progress. Scrutiny of current work shows that too many pupils fail to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in some classes where teaching is stronger, there is evidence of pupils making better rates of progress, particularly in writing.

### **External support**

External support provided on behalf of the local authority has been fragmented and has lacked continuity. In March 2017, the school began working successfully with Leigh Trust. They established good working relationships and began to help address the weaknesses. However, before anything was seen through to completion, the support ended. Despite leaders in May 2017 making a specific request to the local authority for support to improve teaching and learning, this was too slow to materialise. There was too much of a delay before the school began to receive support from a new teaching school. This delay hampered progress. Other aspects of the local authority's commissioned support have been more effective. Leaders have valued and benefited from the guidance from the local authority's commissioned priority lead. Overall, however, the local authority's commissioned support has not had enough of a positive impact on driving forward improvement.