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11 January 2018

Robert Leach  
Interim Headteacher  
Lubavitch Junior Boys School  
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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 14 December 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in February 2016. 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 interim 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 second monitoring inspection on 14 December 2017**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with school leaders, other staff, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and the adviser who provides support and challenge to the school on behalf of the local authority. Inspectors checked the school's single central record of vetting checks on staff and held a meeting with the designated lead for safeguarding. Inspectors visited classes to observe pupils' learning and reviewed work in pupils' books. A range of subjects were visited, including Kodesh, the Jewish studies curriculum. Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss their learning and views of the school. They also observed pupils' conduct in the playground and in the lunch hall.

### **Context**

The deputy headteacher left the school at the end of the summer term. In September 2017, the IEB appointed an interim assistant headteacher and an interim literacy leader. Several teachers have left and joined the school since the previous monitoring inspection. Many teachers were appointed on temporary contracts. Suitable plans are in place to secure substantive leadership and permanent teaching staff.

The IEB and local authority expected the school to become an academy on 1 December 2017. Although this did not take place, plans for academy conversion are progressing well. The proposed date is now 1 April 2018.

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

The headteacher's strong and ambitious leadership is successfully transforming the culture of the school. He has taken firm and purposeful action to tackle the areas that need to be better. The IEB, local authority and staff have great confidence in the headteacher's work and his vision to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the opportunities and challenges they may face beyond the school community.

Both the headteacher and IEB know exactly what needs to be done to improve the school's performance. They have credible and realistic plans to secure the necessary improvements. Crucially, they have made important headway in improving leadership capacity, the curriculum and the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, they recognise that there is a great deal to do to ensure that pupils receive the teaching they need to make strong progress in all subjects.

The IEB continues to provide a careful balance of support and challenge to senior leaders. Board members are liaising closely with the local authority to prepare for a smooth transition to academy status. This includes implementing suitable policies

and procedures as a basis for future development.

In the past, leaders did not hold staff to account for the impact of their work on pupils' outcomes. The headteacher has ensured that this is no longer the case. Through the introduction of an effective system to manage teachers' performance, leaders reinforce their high expectations for pupils' achievement. Teachers are clear about what they need to do to improve their teaching skills. Most teachers value the support they receive and are keen to act on leaders' advice. Equally, leaders identify and address underperformance swiftly. As a result, they have eliminated the weakest teaching and the quality of pupils' learning is improving.

At the time of the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher and the IEB were the driving forces of improvement. In the absence of any capacity within the school itself, they drew heavily on support from the local authority to implement their plans for improvement. The recent appointments of interim senior and middle leaders, including an assistant headteacher, have added much-needed leadership capacity. New leaders share the headteacher's ambitious vision for the school. They have quickly got to grips with the work they need to do to translate his vision into reality. In a relatively short space of time, they have effected positive change in their areas of responsibility, both in terms of the quality of teaching and securing breadth in the curriculum. The headteacher and the local authority adviser work constructively alongside the newly appointed leaders to develop their leadership skills. For example, they are training them to give precise feedback to teachers, plan and prioritise actions and measure the impact of their work. Although the school is still reliant on the local authority, it is now in a better position to secure improvements for itself.

Following a recent audit by the local authority, leaders fundamentally reviewed the school's provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Basic systems are now in place to assess and plan for pupils' needs. Through better links with external agencies, the SEN coordinator is building a comprehensive picture of what needs to be done to ensure that pupils overcome their specific barriers to learning. This has been complemented by targeted training for teachers and staff. As result, leaders and staff have a growing awareness of how best to promote pupils' achievement. The IEB has also appointed additional teaching assistants who support pupils in the classroom and provide one-to-one or small-group interventions. Pupils' progress towards their targets is now being tracked, with parents and carers involved in contributing to the school's assessment of their children's needs. Undoubtedly, these changes represent a considerable step forward from the position at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Nevertheless, they are too recent to have secured sustained improvements in the achievement of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

The headteacher, ably supported by the interim assistant headteacher, is taking decisive action to address ongoing shortcomings in the curriculum, although significant weaknesses remain. He has rightly identified that implementing a stimulating and balanced curriculum is vital to improving the quality of education the

school provides. Displays around the school and work in pupils' books indicate that pupils are studying a broader range of subjects than was previously the case. In science, for example, leaders have ensured that the curriculum covers a broad range of topics, with an appropriate focus on subject-specific skills, such as classification and observation. As a consequence, gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are diminishing. In order to deepen their understanding, pupils are also benefiting from opportunities to make links between the subjects they study. For example, pupils' learning about trees and plants in science was supplemented effectively by detailed sketches of the structure of leaves in art.

Leaders have begun to address past weaknesses in English and mathematics. Their high expectations for pupils' writing are particularly noteworthy. Pupils build well on their existing skills and understanding through opportunities to write at length in different curriculum subjects. For example, during Black History month, Year 5 pupils produced high-quality diary entries to record how they thought Nelson Mandela might have felt while he was in prison. However, leaders understand that their work to improve the English, mathematics and science curriculums is not embedded. Consequently, pupils are not making as much progress as they could. They have suitable plans in place to overcome this. For example, in science, they are increasing the amount of teaching time and have appointed an external adviser to develop teachers' subject knowledge.

As at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, the curriculum in art, history and geography remains in its infancy. Although pupils study these subjects, insufficient attention is placed on developing pupils' subject-specific skills and knowledge. For example, the quality of pupils' artwork is variable because they have limited opportunities to experiment with different techniques or mediums beyond sketching or simple drawing. Although they were proud of their artwork, pupils were unable to describe the techniques they had used or talk about how they could improve their work.

Despite leaders' actions, the curriculum lacks the necessary breadth and balance to adequately support pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain or the next stages of their education. Through the recent Black History month, leaders and teachers have made a start on developing pupils' awareness of and respect for different cultures. Across the school, pupils studied key figures in the civil rights movement in the United States of America. For example, Year 2 pupils explained that learning about Rosa Parks helped them understand the importance of treating everyone equally. Pupils told inspectors that this was an important thing to learn because 'we need to know the difference between what's fair and what isn't'. However, pupils do not learn about other faiths or understand that others may hold different beliefs from their own. This prevents pupils from being well prepared to understand and contribute positively to the wider community.

Leaders ensure that pupils feel safe and are kept safe in school, seeking guidance from the local authority and external agencies where necessary. All the necessary

vetting checks are carried out to ensure that adults are suitable to work in the school. However, at the time of the inspection the safeguarding policy published on the school's website had not been updated to reflect recent changes in staff.

Staff understand their duties to safeguard pupils, including the signs that may indicate a pupil's welfare is at risk and how they should report concerns. However, pupils are not taught how to recognise and mitigate all potential risks to their safety. Their awareness of what they might do if they see unsafe or dangerous material on the internet is limited.

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

Leaders' actions to improve teaching and learning are beginning to pay dividends. Although the quality of teaching remains variable, there are now pockets of good teaching. Leaders' willingness to tackle underperformance has led to a high turnover in staff since the previous full inspection. Teachers who have joined the school have brought with them high expectations and a keen desire to do their best for the pupils. Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils are motivated and typically work hard on the tasks teachers set. Pupils spoke positively about the changes that were taking place in the school. Comments such as 'we learn lots in this school' and 'teachers give us hard work but make the learning fun' were typical of their views.

Leaders' introduction of termly assessments for reading, writing and mathematics provide teachers with a general overview of pupils' progress and attainment. As yet, teachers are not routinely using ongoing assessments to inform their planning, which is leaders' intention for the coming term.

In English, the teaching of writing is continuing to improve. Well-chosen tasks and resources inspire pupils to produce writing of increasingly high quality. Work in pupils' books and around the school show that pupils are regularly challenged to use their skills to write for different purposes and in different fiction and non-fiction genres, such as reports, stories and poems. Where teaching is stronger, teachers provide pupils with clear examples of what they need to do to be successful in their writing. However, this approach is not consistent across the school.

Pupils' variable handwriting and spelling skills continue to hinder them from producing writing to the best of their abilities. Pupils of all ages often form and join letters inconsistently. Pupils are unclear about how they can improve their handwriting, even though they would like to do so. Although pupils' phonic skills have improved, teachers do not routinely expect pupils to apply this knowledge to spell words accurately. Similarly, teachers do not pick up on pupils' errors and this prevents them from learning from their mistakes.

In reading, teachers select high-quality texts which stretch pupils' comprehension skills and introduce them to new vocabulary. This too, is having a positive impact on

the quality of pupils' writing. Pupils are beginning to make more adventurous word choices, considering whether they are appropriate to the style of writing and the impact they might have on the reader. However, these improvements are diluted because pupils are not encouraged to read for pleasure outside of their English lessons. Pupils told inspectors that do not have individual reading books or that they have to read books that are not at the right level for them. The new literacy leader is investing in new resources to ensure that pupils read widely, both inside and outside of school.

Mathematics teaching is a relative strength of the school. Pupils' understanding of number and arithmetic is well developed. However, teaching does not routinely support pupils in mastering their skills and knowledge. Apart from Years 5 and 6, pupils' achievement is limited by too few opportunities to solve problems or reason mathematically.

In subjects other than English and mathematics, the quality of teaching correlates directly with the quality of the curriculum. All national curriculum subjects are now taught. This in itself represents a big step forward for the school. Science teaching is improving because teachers now understand the skills and knowledge pupils are expected to develop for their age. However, in subjects such as history, geography, art and design and technology, medium-term plans are not in place. Consequently, teachers are unable to plan for clear progression in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.

Teaching assistants make a variable contribution to how well pupils learn, particularly for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Sometimes, adults allow pupils to become too dependent on their guidance or instructions when completing an activity. This prevents pupils from working out for themselves what they need to do.

In the early years, improvements to teaching and the curriculum are ensuring that children are better prepared for their learning in Year 1 than has been the case in the past. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is now above the national average. Both the outdoor and indoor areas are stimulating and well-maintained environments. However, as with the rest of the school, more work is needed to ensure that teachers plan activities which challenge children to achieve to the best of their abilities in all areas of their learning.

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

Pupils' attitudes to school are much improved since the previous monitoring inspection. In part this is because adults provide clear, consistent expectations for pupils' behaviour throughout the school day. It is also a direct reflection of the improvements in teaching and the curriculum. Pupils show enthusiasm for their learning and settle down to tasks without a fuss because teachers plan activities that capture their interests.



Pupils usually conduct themselves sensibly around the school. They are polite, considerate and friendly to each other and staff. They told inspectors that they are all get on well together, because everyone 'follows the rules for being sensible'. Pupils said that incidents of bullying are unusual because 'it is important to always be kind and nice to everyone'. They are confident that staff sort out any issues or disagreements quickly and fairly. Pupils particularly appreciate how the headteacher keeps a close watch on pupils' behaviour around the school. As one pupil put it: 'The headteacher stops any silliness because he wants us to learn and work hard.'

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Outcomes for pupils remain uneven across the school. This is because teaching and the curriculum do not consistently meet pupils' needs. However, work in pupils' books and school assessment information indicate that an increasing proportion of the current pupils are on track to achieve age-expected skills, knowledge and understanding in English, mathematics and science. Outcomes in other national curriculum subjects are variable and sometimes weak. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently prepared for the next stages of their education.

Small group sizes limit the meaningful analysis of how well different groups of pupils achieve over time. Suitable use of the pupil premium funding means that the small number of disadvantaged pupils typically make similar progress to their peers. School assessment information and work in pupils' books suggest that an increasing proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making the progress leaders expect. Nevertheless, improvements to the provision for this group of pupils are too recent to have had a sustained impact on their progress over time.

In 2017, standards at the end of key stage 1 rose considerably. In reading, writing, mathematics and science, the proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations was broadly in line with the national figures. The most able pupils did particularly well: in reading, writing and mathematics, a greater proportion of pupils attained the higher levels than other pupils nationally. Results in the Year 1 national phonics screening check also show a trend of improvement. For the first time, the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the required standard was broadly similar to the national average. Leaders are rightly keeping a careful eye on teaching and pupils' outcomes in key stage 1 to ensure that these improvements are maintained.

In the 2017 key stage 2 assessments, overall, pupils' progress was broadly in line with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they did not make the excellent progress necessary to catch up on their previous underachievement. This was particularly the case in reading, where the proportion of pupils attaining age-expected standards was below the national average. Although pupils' outcomes in writing and mathematics demonstrate clear signs of improvement, here too the proportion of pupils meeting age-related standards was just below the national figures. Of greatest concern was pupils' attainment in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling test. The proportion of pupils reaching

the expected standard was low compared to their peers nationally and contrasts sharply with their outcomes in the writing assessments. This was also the case for the 2016 cohort of Year 6 pupils. Leaders have analysed the reasons for this carefully. They have identified that in the past, pupils were not consistently taught English grammar, punctuation and spelling rules. To address this, pupils now have weekly sessions with a clear focus on age-related grammar, spelling and punctuation skills. It is too soon to evaluate whether this new approach will raise standards.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide the school with intensive levels of support. It recognises that, despite recent improvements in leadership capacity, this level of support remains crucial to prevent standards from slipping and the momentum for improvement stalling. The local authority's adviser visits the school weekly. He has formed strong and productive working partnerships with leaders and staff. These are having a clear impact on raising standards. Leaders at all levels appreciate how he works with them to check the quality of teaching, develop their leadership skills and provide constructive challenge about what needs to be better. Advisers are carefully tailoring the support they provide to enable new leaders to take increasing ownership of improvements in their areas of responsibility.