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Mrs J Rogula  
Acting Headteacher  
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Leigh Sinton  
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WR13 5DX

Dear Mrs Rogula

### **Implementation of Leigh and Bransford Primary School's Action Plan**

Following the visit of Mr D Simpson HMI to your school on 27 and 28 April 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school has made limited progress since the last monitoring inspection and limited progress overall since being subject to special measures.

The school is permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Worcestershire. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid  
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF LEIGH AND BRANSFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN**

### Findings of the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit seven lessons or parts of lessons, one registration session and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and the Local Education Authority (LEA) link inspector. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the acting headteacher, a member of the governing body and a representative from the LEA.

Since the last visit the school's progress has been impeded by the long term absence of the headteacher. For much of the intervening time, the deputy headteacher has managed the school well, tackled some challenging parental and personnel concerns with assurance, and established a culture of greater openness in decision making. The LEA has quickly arranged the temporary appointment of an acting headteacher with experience of schools in special measures. Further changes include the resignation of a long established teacher who was well respected in the community, together with two parent governors and the clerk to the governing body. Despite these events, the staff have worked hard and demonstrated a commendable commitment to the school's improvement.

The pupils' performance in end-of-key stage tests was reported in the last letter. The pupils receive a very good start to school life at the Foundation Stage. The school believes that all pupils will attain national expectations or better in Key Stage 1 tests. Of the 11 pupils in Year 6, 92 per cent are predicted to attain Level 4 or better in English, mathematics and science. In lessons, standards are generally in line with or above age-related expectations, although a number of the pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable, particularly in Key Stage 1.

The progress of pupils was satisfactory or better in all of the seven lessons observed. It was good or better in three. In these lessons, the pupils worked industriously and enjoyed opportunities to develop their autonomy, decision making, and their capacity for speculation and reflection. Their accurate use of technical vocabulary from the Foundation Stage onwards continues to be a strong feature of the school's work. Where the pupils made less progress, teaching did not provide the pace or challenge to fully extend them, or whole-class activities were too protracted.

The quality of teaching continues to be never less than satisfactory, two lessons were good and one was very good. The proportion of good or better teaching has declined since the last visit. In the best lessons, teaching enabled the pupils to work at pace, expected them to consider their learning strategies or the methods they had used, reading activities were used effectively to focus the pupils' attention on aspects of inference or technique, and the pupils were held accountable for their

progress. In the lessons that were satisfactory, the teachers were not sufficiently secure or confident in using a range of teaching and learning strategies to enable the pupils' progress to be brisk. Starter activities took too long and the pupils were not promptly engaged in learning activities. The school usefully divides each class population into three groups according to ability, however, activities in some lessons do not sufficiently extend the top-attainers or the least able.

The effectiveness of teaching assistants is variable. In the best practice, they are clearly deployed by teachers and have the questioning skills to develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding appropriately. However, on occasions, they are not fully occupied or can disrupt the flow of the lesson by too vocally supporting specific pupils. Importantly, throughout the school, the teachers have established a stimulating learning environment through attractive displays, interesting resources and celebrating the good work of the pupils.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were good or better in five lessons and satisfactory in two. Their behaviour around the school was very good. The pupils demonstrated an appetite for learning, were keen to participate and took pride in their work. Their courtesy, ready capacity to organise themselves and effective group working skills are a strength of the school. At times some pupils in Key Stage 1 became restless during carpet time. The rate of attendance for the spring term is 93.8 per cent which is below the national median. There have been no exclusions of pupils this school year.

In the five weeks that the acting headteacher has been in post, she has provided good leadership, established a clear sense of the school's strengths and weaknesses and significantly refocused its work. Her background and skills complement the deputy headteacher well. The two have the potential to be a highly effective leadership team. They are keen to see the school's rate of progress significantly accelerate and have identified the priorities for improvement. However, continued uncertainty about the long-term leadership of the school inevitably diminishes its sense of educational direction.

The resignations of governors and the clerk have exacerbated the chair of the governing body's efforts to provide continuity in a difficult time for the school. The governors have benefited from LEA training which has enabled them to audit their current effectiveness and identify areas for further improvement, in particular, monitoring the school's development and systems, target setting and establishing clear terms of reference for its committees. The chair of governors continues to provide clear and considered direction to the governing body's work and is knowledgeable about the central issues facing the school currently.

The LEA provides extensive support and rigorous monitoring of the school's development. The link inspector has acted swiftly to provide the school with effective leadership during a period of uncertainty and has kept the LEA's work focused on the implementation of the school's action plan. Regular reports and

reviews accurately evaluate the school's work, although the consistency with which this is reported to governors has proved to be contentious.

## **Action taken to address the areas for improvement**

### **1: establish and publish unequivocally the educational direction of the school and ensure all staff and governors are signed up to this**

The school improvement and school evaluation teams have now been sensibly amalgamated. The deputy headteacher has responsibility for the new team's future work and a governor has been identified to minute meetings. So far the group has met once and its effectiveness cannot yet be measured. At the meeting, the acting headteacher identified nine aspects of the original action plan requiring urgent action. Although a few pastoral policies have been revised, the original programme for the review of policies has so significantly slipped that a new timetable will have to be produced.

Progress on this area for improvement is limited.

### **2: accelerate the achievement of pupils, especially in Foundation Stage, information and communication technology (ICT) and the top-attainers**

As a result of high expectations and consistently challenging teaching, the pupils in the Foundation Stage are making rapid progress and many are showing skills in line with the early stages of Key Stage 1.

Teachers are using ICT more regularly due to effective training and technical support. However, despite some improvements in recording the pupils' use of ICT, no one has overall responsibility for monitoring their progress and ensuring that they have a sufficiently broad experience of its use and application.

Training has recently been instigated focusing upon top-attainers. Some lesson planning shows detailed and appropriately challenging activities for the more able. However, overall plans do not sufficiently take account of the specific next steps necessary to extend and accelerate the progress of the pupils identified in the top-attainers' register.

As a result of improvements introduced by the acting headteacher, parents and carers are better informed about their children's progress and specific targets to raise attainment. Plans are in hand to similarly enhance the quality of the pupils' reports. Teachers now assess the progress of the pupils on a termly basis but the school does not monitor the resultant data systematically in order to target intervention and challenge underperformance. The school has not decided on an appropriately demanding rate of progress for those pupils with a history of underachievement.

Progress in this area for improvement is reasonable.

### **3: ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum is at least good**

The introduction of policies on assessment, reporting and recording, and learning and teaching have been delayed and need to be introduced as part of a professional discussion to improve planning and to meet the needs of different pupils. There has been no sustained developmental work on assessment for learning and marking is insufficiently focused on what the pupils have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

The teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from well focused training provided by the LEA. However, the strategies provided are not consistently secured in day-to-day practice. As a result of the turbulence in the senior leadership team the programme of classroom observations has not been as extensive as planned. The observations that have taken place have been well focused and accurate. The school acknowledges that an effective programme, which involves all teachers, will strengthen cohesion and disseminate good practice. A common framework for medium-term planning has been introduced and better measures the anticipated progress of the pupils over time.

Progress in this area for improvement is reasonable.

### **4: improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels and ensure statutory requirements are met in full**

The subject co-ordinators and special needs co-ordinator have received appropriate training. Folders to demonstrate their monitoring have been introduced but are of variable quality. Considerable work remains to be done to enable co-ordinators to be accountable for their subject areas. Rigorous examination of the pupils' work, undertaken by the teachers during a training day, has identified areas for future development, particularly with regard to ensuring that work and support materials better match the differing needs of the pupils and address deficiencies in Key Stage 1. However, the school does not have a clear programme of further scrutinies in order to monitor the progress in tackling these weaknesses or identifying new points for improvement. Issues arising from the last safety audit and weaknesses in risk assessment persist. In the absence of a substantive headteacher, performance management procedures ceased to operate but are now reinstated. The training for governors has helped them to identify their strengths and weaknesses. They are aware of the significant work they need to do, including establishing a calendar to scrutinise the school's work throughout the year to help them hold the school's management to account. After a long period of weakness and absence, the current senior leadership team have the potential to effect more rapid improvement but have had little time to achieve significant change.

Progress in this area for improvement is limited.