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27 September 2007

Ms Virginia Fraher
Headteacher
London Fields Primary School
Westgate Street
London
E8 3RL

Dear Ms Fraher

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LONDON FIELDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 12 and 13 September 2007 with Asyia Kazmi HMI, David Wynford-Jones, Additional Inspector, Lynne Kauffman, Additional Inspector and Susan Thomas-Pounce, Additional Inspector; I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – *satisfactory*

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the IEB and the Executive Director of Standards & School Effectiveness for Hackney.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
H M Inspector

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 12 and 13 September 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and executive principal, groups of pupils, the chair of the Interim Executive Board and representatives from the Learning Trust (LT). The LT fulfils the functions of the local authority for Hackney.

Context

The school was placed in special measures following an inspection in March 2007. This monitoring visit took place in the first full week of the academic year. Since the inspection, a new headteacher and an executive principal have taken charge. At the time of the monitoring visit one third of the teaching staff were in their first week at the school.

Achievement and standards

Unvalidated results for 2007 show that by the end of Year 2 standards have improved in reading and significantly so in writing, but have fallen in mathematics. They remain well below average.

By the end of Year 6 standards have declined and are well below average in English and mathematics and below average in science. Standards declined significantly in mathematics. Girls attain considerably higher standards than boys but still fall well short of nationally expected levels.

From a low starting point pupils made reasonable progress in lessons as observed by inspectors during the monitoring visit. The poor behaviour in the previous year affected progress, and the decisive steps taken to address this have been very successful. Interviews with pupils indicate that some of the pupils do not find the work challenging enough.

There was no specific area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2007 for this section

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are now good and the headteacher has effectively promoted a sense of shared identity. Pupils enjoy school and are developing confident relationships with each other and staff. Pupils have more opportunities to take responsibility through the work of the school council, where their views are taken into account. One response has been the newly appointed Playground Friends. These volunteers from Year 6 have been trained to care for younger pupils at break times, helping them to play and make friends. Pupils now feel safe in the playground with supervised games and improved equipment.

Staff have ensured that systems and structures are in place so that behaviour in lessons is now good. Behaviour around the school has also improved. The school is calm and pupils feel safe. Staff are in evidence around the site and buildings at break times and after school. There are clear expectations regarding conduct and behaviour and pupils are starting to take pride in their behaviour and a greater responsibility for their own behaviour.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2007:

- Improve behaviour to ensure that all pupils enjoy school and are safe from harm or harassment – good

Quality of provision

One senior member of staff mentioned, 'our aim is to challenge learning, but our priority has been make pupils feel valued and secure'. Improvement in teaching and learning was a thread running through two of the school's key issues for action from the previous inspection. The visit was too early in the term to measure the impact of the changes accurately. However there are positive changes in staffing, new decor makes the school environment a bright, stimulating place and a clear behaviour policy has been introduced. All of these factors are helping to change the face of classrooms. This change is beginning to enable learners to learn and teachers to teach.

Despite the early stage in the term, inspectors observed the consistently good use of the new behaviour policy. Pupils feel they are being treated fairly and some older pupils see the value of taking responsibility for their learning.

The LT has worked in tandem with the school to plan and develop teaching and learning. The deployment of Primary Advisory Teachers, together with work with the LT through regular meetings to monitor teaching and learning, is giving the school confidence to make changes.

Consistently good relationships in class help pupils to learn. Their learning improves further where teachers engage them in a variety of purposeful activities. Teachers' limited use of data has a negative impact on planning lessons to meet pupils' needs. There is still inconsistency in the production of lesson plans. Opportunities are missed to have a pupil-friendly starter to help learners focus on the topic for the lesson. Additionally some teachers omit a final review of the lesson and so fail to consolidate learning and plan for the next stage of development. This has a negative impact on progress. Teaching assistants are deployed across the school with variable involvement. There is evidence of the school's success in training and development of their teaching assistants.

Therefore, while it is too soon to see any impact of improved teaching there has been satisfactory progress in this area.

Children settle quickly into the Nursery and the Reception classes. They have a positive attitude to school and are growing in confidence. This is because the teachers interact well with the children and provide them with a more appropriate

curriculum and greater opportunities to take some responsibility for their own learning. As a result the children are well behaved and attentive in lessons.

Satisfactory progress is being made in planning the curriculum. All areas of learning are covered in the weekly planning. Teachers are rightly focussing on the children's personal development and fostering their communication, language and literacy skills. Better use is being made of the limited outdoor area to promote the children's learning, especially their physical development. However, the weekly plans now need to be further refined to ensure that teachers and support staff are clear about the learning intentions of each session and how the activities will promote individual children's learning. Greater use of the outdoor areas can still be made to promote the children's creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world.

The school's progress in tackling the issues from the last inspection has been hampered by the need to recruit new staff, but is now well placed to move forward to improve provision in the Foundation Stage. Teachers in the Nursery and in both Reception classes are new to the school and took up their posts at the beginning of the autumn term 2007. The three teachers have previous Foundation Stage experience and bring to the school a commitment to provide the children with a good education. The parts of the lessons observed in all three classes were taught to a satisfactory standard, with some good features. The Foundation Stage is currently overseen by the deputy headteacher, who is an experienced Foundation Stage and former Local Authority Early Years Advisory teacher.

The pastoral care of the children is satisfactory. Teachers ensure that the children are welcomed into school and delivered safely to their parent / guardian at the end of the sessions. It is too early to judge the level of academic guidance as most of the children have only been in school a few days and are still attending on a 'mornings only' basis. However, discussions with the class teachers indicate that they are already assessing the children and beginning to identify strategies to support their learning.

Teacher assessments indicate that standards at the end of the summer term 2007 were well below nationally expected levels for five year olds in all six areas of learning. The weakest areas were communication language and literacy, mathematical development and personal development. The assessments were checked by the deputy head and moderated by the LTs' Early Years team.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2007:

- Improve the teaching to raise standards in English, mathematics and science, and ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve as well as they can – *satisfactory*
- Improve the curriculum, teaching and care provided for children in the Foundation Stage – *satisfactory*

Leadership and management

Since the inspection there has been a change of headteacher and an additional appointment of an executive principal. These key figures combine their wealth of experience and expertise to run the school effectively. The school has a strong and relatively large leadership team. Since the inspection senior leaders have been distracted from their strategic role because they have had to manage operational matters, partly because of the challenging circumstances of the school. In addition, middle leaders have not been clear as to what was required of them and therefore are not adequately carrying out their own responsibilities. There also exist gaps in leadership post for literacy and the Foundation Stage.

Classroom teachers have insufficient information on their pupils to improve teaching and learning further because managers have not been trained in the use of data and do not have an adequate grasp of standards in the school.

Following the inspection the most urgent issues revolved around replacing a number of teaching staff. This has been done imaginatively through an innovative arrangement with a private agency. This has secured a team of teachers to work together in the school.

As part of the general improvement in the school ethos the views of pupils are respected and the school is beginning the process of parental involvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2007:

- Improve the quality of leadership at all levels by establishing clear priorities for improvement that take account of the views of pupils and parents – *satisfactory*

External support

The LT has worked with the school to ensure that urgent and robust action has been taken since the inspection. This has resulted in staff changes at all levels. The impact on the quality of provision in the school and the well-being of pupils has been huge. The LT has supported the school with a team of consultants whose advice and work is valued by the school. The actions outlined in the action plan are being carried out and have already had a very positive impact. The secondment of an additional assistant head with expertise in behaviour management has directly addressed the most urgent concern of the inspection.

Priorities for further improvement

- use data to establish pupils' standards and set appropriate goals to accelerate progress
- clarify the responsibilities of leaders at all levels and provide support to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively
- improve the quality of teaching to raise standards.