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Mrs June Willis
Headteacher
Ainslie Wood Primary School
140 Ainslie Wood Road
Waltham Forest
London
E4 9DD

Dear Mrs Willis

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Ainslie Wood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Waltham Forest.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Ainslie Wood Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 July 2009

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work; scrutinised documents; and met with the interim headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and pupils, as well as the inclusion manager, the chair of the interim executive board, and a representative of the local authority. Ten lessons, or parts of lessons, and one assembly were observed. Assessment and tracking data were scrutinised and the inspector looked at documents relating to the local authority's statement of action and the school improvement plan, as well as evidence of the school's audit of progress since the last monitoring visit in February 2009.

Context

The interim executive board has appointed a permanent headteacher, an Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator and an inclusion manager, who will join the school in September 2009. The interim headteacher will leave at the end of the summer term and has arranged time to induct the newly appointed headteacher into the school at the end of the school year.

Achievement and standards

The most recent national test results for Year 6 pupils and teachers' assessments for Year 2 still show too many variations in pupils' attainment and rates of progress. These inconsistencies, including a dip in standards compared to previous years, reflect past weaknesses in the teaching and a legacy of underachievement, which were present at the time of the school's inspection. Despite these variations, there is encouraging evidence that the effectiveness and consistency of teaching in all classes are improving. This is starting to accelerate the progress pupils make, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In addition, an increasing proportion of boys are making up lost ground so that the achievement gap between boys and girls is beginning to close. However, there is still some way to go to ensure a sustained improvement to standards for all pupils. Pupils' workbooks and displays of their writing show improvements to the accuracy, presentation and structure of their writing. Achievement in mathematics is also improving because lessons include more opportunities for pupils to solve problems and to practise their number skills. Greater consistency in the teaching of phonics (letter sounds) in the Early Years Foundation Stage is contributing to improving the children's reading skills. This is also increasing the children's confidence in reading independently when handling books in both the Nursery and Reception Years, with evidence that boys, in particular, are now settling for more sustained periods of time when engaged in reading and writing tasks.

Progress since the last visit on the additional priority for improvement:

- accelerate the achievement of boys in all classes in reading, writing and mathematics – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave well in lessons, at break-times and during assemblies. Teachers and support staff have good relationships with the pupils, who say they enjoy school and feel safe. Improved teaching has enabled pupils to be more involved and interested in their lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and this was evident in an excellent mathematics lesson, where pupils showed very positive attitudes and a determination to deal with the challenges of calculating ratios and fractions. Pupils continue to enjoy their sporting and other activities and are very appreciative of the additional time the staff give them after school and during residential visits or special events and celebrations. The end-of-year performance by Year 2 pupils was much enjoyed by parents and families and also provided an opportunity for the pupils to share their achievements by reciting poetry and singing songs.

The school maintains its ethos of care and respect for all and pupils are now provided with a wider range of responsibilities that enable them to contribute to the school and local community. In addition to the opportunities provided for the school council to represent the views of other pupils, ambassadors and play leaders have been introduced since the last monitoring visit, as well as specific 'monitor' roles which have helped pupils to feel more involved. As one commented, 'It's much better now because we all have the chance to be ambassadors or to help other pupils.' Much improved playground resources and activities, led by play leaders and supervisory staff, have contributed greatly to safer and more enjoyable break-times.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- provide more activities outside at lunchtime to channel the pupils' interest and energy – outstanding
- give pupils greater responsibility in school life and for their learning – good

Quality of provision

There have been good improvements to the quality of teaching. An increasing proportion of lessons are satisfactory or better. Lessons are usually productive and positive and none of those observed during the inspection was inadequate. This marks a significant improvement since the last visit. Teachers' planning gives accurate and careful consideration to providing work that is tailored to the needs of different groups and individuals. More regular assessments of pupils' attainment and performance, and diligent monitoring of lessons by the leadership team, have improved the effectiveness and productivity of lessons. It is noticeable that, in all the lessons observed, very little time was wasted and the tasks provided were usually challenging and appropriate to move learning forward. In some lessons, there were missed opportunities to extend what the pupils had already achieved so there is scope for teachers to incorporate more extension tasks when planning work. Improved assessment data collated by the leadership team means that teachers are more informed about pupils' performance and capabilities. They are therefore better able to adapt their planning to help pupils work towards more challenging and realistic learning targets. Improved programmes, work and support for pupils who

have learning difficulties or a statement of special educational need have been put in place by the temporary inclusion manager. As a result, support staff and resources are better deployed to improve the achievement of pupils who find learning difficult. Regular and accurate assessments have been introduced which show that, increasingly, more pupils than last year are on course to reach the standards expected for their age. Assessments are sharper and performance data about pupils' progress in Years 1 to 6 are collated more efficiently to identify which pupils are underachieving or making slow progress. Lessons consistently include the use of interactive whiteboards and information and communication technology to provide good visual presentations that help the pupils to focus their learning. However, in some lessons the interactive whiteboards are not used efficiently.

The Early Years Foundation Stage profile and assessments of children's progress are not yet as accurate as it they should be, although there are plans to prioritise this for improvement. Assessments of children's progress are made by the staff, including photographs and annotations of what the children are doing. However, these are not being used sufficiently to provide tasks that extend or challenge the children. Planning has improved in both the Nursery and Reception Years so that more activities and time are given to improving the children's speaking and listening skills. There is still scope for the staff to improve the way questions are posed so that they extend children's thinking further. There are increasing opportunities for children to choose activities outdoors in the Reception class, and the supervision of this has improved since the last visit, so there is a better balance of indoor and outdoor learning.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- urgently improve the quality of teaching throughout the school – good
- provide for more effective learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that all adults demonstrate higher expectations through the activities they plan – satisfactory
 - giving children the opportunity to develop their speaking skills through a better balance of instructions and open questions – satisfactory
 - improving provision for outdoor play in Reception – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The interim headteacher has been very effective in helping the staff to improve the quality of teaching. Aply supported by the deputy headteacher, the staff have responded well to the increased level of monitoring of lessons. The staff team set themselves higher expectations so there is a willingness to improve their understanding of assessment. This has ensured that pupils' performance is tracked more accurately so that the school can consistently move towards eradicating underachievement.

There is a noticeable change in the ethos of the school because the interim headteacher has been very effective in providing a shared vision. Consequently, many of the inconsistencies of approach seen at the time of the last visit are being

addressed. Leadership roles have been clarified and structures are now in place to ensure both day-to-day management and strategic leadership focus on improving the achievement of pupils. Staff morale is high and everyone is pulling together towards common aims. There is a renewed confidence among teachers and support staff.

There are good plans in place to ensure a smooth transition when the interim headteacher moves at the end of this term. Changes being made are based on a very detailed and careful analysis so that the new headteacher has a clear assessment of the school's improvements and progress. The temporary inclusion manager has made great strides towards evaluating provision for pupils with special educational needs. Transition arrangements for the handover to the newly appointed inclusion manager have been carefully planned. Individual education plans are accurate and both resources and support staff are deployed efficiently to meet the specific needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Phase leaders in each year group share their planning and refer to the core priorities in the improvement plan to ensure that they are on course to raise achievement and sustain improvements to teaching. Staff welcome the new opportunities for wider communication, which have resulted in more open dialogue and sharing of good practice.

The interim executive board has been effective in monitoring the process of school improvement. It has acted decisively to secure the permanent appointment of a headteacher and senior staff to manage inclusion and the Early Years Foundation Stage. The board has been successful in supporting and challenging the school so that there is no complacency in ensuring that it eliminates underachievement, raises standards and works towards increasing its capacity to sustain continuous improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- focus leaders' and managers' work at all levels on bringing about sustained improvement in pupils' achievement throughout the school – good
- raise everyone's expectations by setting more challenging targets and checking that everyone is working to their potential – good

External support

The local authority has continued to support the school well by providing a highly effective interim headteacher. The support provided by the headteacher has also improved and extended the monitoring roles of the deputy headteacher and phase leaders in each year group. Advisers and an advanced skills teacher from another school have worked to support the staff team, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which has led to improvements and increased confidence and morale. The support and advice provided also accounts for the greater consistency of practice seen in lessons across the school.