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Mrs D Rogan and Miss Y Dilley
The Headteachers
Waterman Primary School
The Boulevard
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1QF

Dear Mrs Rogan and Miss Dilley

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Waterman Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 12 and 13 November, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2009. 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 be appointed when the local authority has clarified the position regarding the school's future and providing suitable mentoring arrangements can be put in place.

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 Essex.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Waterman Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 12/13 November 2009

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and the acting headteacher. HMI held meetings with all staff, the chair of governors, and representatives from the local authority.

Context

The substantive headteacher resigned her post on the 1 October 2009. The local authority has appointed the headteacher of Wickford Church of England VC Infants, a National Support School, to coordinate the support for this school as executive headteacher. This part-time appointment is supported by a similar arrangement with an acting headteacher who has been seconded from the local authority central team. An assistant headteacher has been seconded to the school from the local authority literacy service. The entire teaching force has been replaced since the start of the school year. A new chair and vice chair of governors took up their responsibilities at the first meeting of the 2009 academic year.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The school is compiling a new assessment database, the first set of data gathered since the beginning of the school year provides a useful comparison with the scrutiny of pupils' work conducted by HMI. In English, the majority of pupils are currently functioning one year below the level expected for their chronological age; a noticeable difference is evident between their reading and writing skills. Evidence from the pupils' books indicates that most are beginning to make appropriate progress in some aspects of their work. The school is placing appropriate emphasis on developing the pupils' speaking and listening skills. The small numbers of pupils in each year group offers the opportunity to provide individual redress to weaknesses in the pupils' prior learning, but it is too early to evaluate the schools efforts to raise standards. Pupils from vulnerable groups are progressing at least as well as their peers and some are making their first real progress. HMI will review the assessment evidence base as part of the spring term monitoring visit.

Progress since the last inspection

- Raise expectations of what pupils can achieve through setting challenging targets and checking that everyone is working to their potential – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Since the beginning of the September term attendance has improved by over 2% to a figure close to the school's target. However, with the small numbers of pupils in the school and the limited number of weeks over which the data has been gathered these results must be considered provisional. HMI will compare the full autumn term data with the comparable figure for 2008/9 during the next monitoring visit.

The pupils' attitudes to learning were generally positive although many individuals lacked confidence in their own ability. On most occasions, pupils listened to their peers with respect and were keen to contribute their ideas. Some calling out remains an issue but most pupils respond well to the schools behaviour management routines.

Progress since the last inspection

- Improve the rates of attendance and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils – good

The effectiveness of provision

HMI observed teaching in all settings and conducted the joint observations of lessons with senior staff; the views expressed by these colleagues corresponded with the judgements given by HMI. The formal evaluation of this exercise noted the progress made in the quality of teaching but identified the need to focus lessons on how learning outcomes might be improved. The most effective teaching facilitated learning with well-structured questions that engaged the pupils' attention; however, opportunities were missed in all lessons to provide short well resourced tasks and/or challenges that provided opportunities for pupils to gain new knowledge in a simple context. Inconsistencies in the quality of questioning placed a barrier on pupil progress because staff sometimes failed to develop questions/ ideas when summarising the collective contributions of the group. Although the use of peer discussion has developed, more needs to be done to use assessment to improve learning. Marking remains inconsistent and does not, as yet, provide clear formative comment in a form that all pupils can understand.

The range of curriculum opportunities is gradually developing so that subjects such as history provide children with opportunities to practice their literacy skills in a different context.

Progress since the last inspection

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school by raising the level of challenge, giving pupils more responsibility for their learning and improving the climate in which they work – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The leadership and management team has brought stability, effective behaviour management and vision. Safeguarding procedures met current government requirements. Senior colleagues have a realistic view of the quality of teaching and learning as well as what needs to be done to improve provision. The development of the recently reconstituted governing body will be considered during the next monitoring visit. The executive headteacher is a National Leader of Education and brings significant experience of school improvement; the senior leadership team has effectively driven the notable improvement in behaviour secured since the beginning of term. This has allowed the recently appointed staff to teach and has created a positive attitude to learning.

Progress since the last inspection

- Focus leadership and management at every level on contributing effectively to school self-evaluation in order to raise pupils' achievement – good

External support

The local authority has provided effective support for the school with the appointment of a successful local headteacher as executive headteacher and the secondment of two members of the advisory service on an acting basis. The authority has enhanced the level of support provided to that outlined in the well-conceived statement of action developed when the school was placed in special measures. The local authority has done well to manage the retirement of the previous senior team and the establishment of a new and effective senior team in the time frame. Senior officers and elected members now need to finalise their discussions on the primary education structures that will be available in the local area.

Priorities for further improvement

- Focus staff training on the quality of questioning and the learning expected in each lesson.