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Ms Prue Barnes
Interim headteacher
Newport School
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London
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Dear Ms Barnes

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Newport School

Following my visit with Sarah McDermott, additional inspector, to your school on 9–10 June 2010, 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 December 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory progress.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 the interim executive board and the Director of Children's Services for Waltham Forest.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Newport School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 9–10 June 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the executive council of the school council, the interim headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, the chair of the interim executive board, a local authority adviser and a group of parents and carers.

Context

At the time of the last inspection, the interim headteacher and senior leadership team were new to their posts and an interim executive board had been established. These senior positions remain the same. There have been a small number of staff changes and two periods of staff restructuring involving the senior leadership team and office staff. As part of the national City Challenge initiative, the school is linked with a Local Leader of Education and her school in Muswell Hill.

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

The early signs of improved pupils' achievement identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and there are two important points which indicate that the school is taking an appropriate series of actions to address the legacy of underachievement. First, there is a clear priority to maintain and enhance the satisfactory progress that children make during the Early Years Foundation Stage. Second, with a more robust system of assessments, the school is starting to pinpoint areas of underachievement for groups of older pupils more clearly and some of those groups have had particular support.

Overall, pupils' attainment remains below that expected nationally but school data indicate that there is some narrowing of the gap with national averages, particularly for pupils in Key Stage 1. Assessment systems have identified considerable variability in pupils' progress between and across different year groups. This is now being tackled through a more robust system of accountability for teachers, alongside good quality professional development and monitoring by senior leaders. Outcomes of the current round of assessments and national tests are not yet available for analysis so it is difficult to evaluate how well pupils have made progress this year. However, where particular strategies have been put in place, the school can demonstrate that pupils can make significant gains in short periods of time. Two examples of this are the pupils in Year 6 who had one-to-one tuition for English and mathematics, and improvements in children's phonic skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The actions taken to improve writing across the school are helping pupils to perceive themselves as writers but there is still some way to go to make up for the lack of age-appropriate skills in this area. Plans to maintain this priority into the next

academic year are sound. Pupils' handwriting is a weakness throughout the school and their general presentation of work in books often gives a poor impression of their learning, with the exception of mathematics work, which is set out clearly. There is no evidence yet to indicate that pupils are making accelerated progress in science or that those who are more able are reaching their full academic potential.

A detailed analysis and evaluation of pupils' progress for each class and key stage for this academic year, together with evaluation of actions taken to support particular underachieving groups, now need to be undertaken. So far, the senior leadership team has quite appropriately taken a strong lead for assessment, and now is the time for teachers to take more responsibility for it. Teachers' understanding of age-related expectations has improved and they are now in a position to have a greater input as to the quality of progress that their pupils make.

In the last inspection report, the school was asked to ensure that pupils understood their targets. Literacy targets are now well understood by pupils and they say that they like having them because it helps them to see how their work has improved. Inconsistencies exist in how fast pupils move through the targets, how they are checked and how they are used to support their learning across different subjects. There are no targets in other areas of their learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science by improving teachers' understanding of age-related learning expectations so that lesson planning is closely matched to the needs of all pupils and their progress is accelerated – satisfactory progress.
- Ensure that pupils, especially the more able, clearly understand targets which offer greater challenge, and which lead to higher attainment – satisfactory progress.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are proud of their work and proud of their school. Their behaviour is good and they enjoy being in school. The work of school ambassadors and prefects enhances pupils' input into the work of the school. The four members of the executive council are very conscientious in their advocacy for pupils across the school and can point to areas where they have had an influence, such as rewards for improved attendance and the reinstatement of 'green time'.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory, with a small amount that is inadequate and some that is good. The school's monitoring clearly shows improvements since the time of the last inspection. Teachers are very appreciative of the direction that they get from senior leaders and say that this is helping them to improve their practice. The pace of teaching is much improved. There are now

consistent systems for lesson plans, behaviour management and differentiating work. While teachers are keen to do what is asked of them, and their practice has definitely improved as a result, lessons are not yet sufficiently tailored to suit what the pupils already know and are interested in. For example, lesson plans are rarely amended to reflect what happened in the previous lesson and although different tasks are in place for different levels of ability, these are not always the best match for each pupil. In addition, the use of learning partners needs to be revisited so that pupils are more clear about the purpose, rather than just as opportunities for talking. There are some examples of good practice, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children's interests, and information about gaps in their learning gained through assessment, feed into teachers' plans very successfully. In order to accelerate the rate that pupils of all ages can make up for previous underachievement, there needs to be more good teaching. As a result of good opportunities for professional development, including team teaching and role-modelling from senior staff, the teachers have the tools to do this.

Teachers' marking of work is much improved recently although it is too early yet to see its effectiveness on pupils' progress. The most significant thing is that the new marking system is clearly understood by teachers and pupils alike. Teachers apply it consistently and pupils take their teachers' written comments very seriously, routinely responding to questions and suggestions made. Pupils particularly like the highlighted sections because they show where they have achieved their targets and objectives. Some teachers' suggestions and comments are more closely linked to learning objectives and targets than others.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all teachers securely understand and apply those components of good teaching that are based on sound assessment
 - developing teachers' understanding of how to use assessment information to accurately track learners' progress so that lesson planning builds effectively on prior learning – satisfactory progress.

- Improve teachers' marking and next step guidance by:
 - developing more consistent strategies in marking pupils' work so that pupils know how to move their learning forward with greater confidence and independence
 - sharing existing good practice and using rigorous monitoring to identify and eradicate ineffective practice – satisfactory progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Strong leadership from a united senior leadership team is providing the school with a clear steer towards improving outcomes for the pupils. They lead by example and provide good role models as classroom practitioners. The work of the leadership

team is held in high regard by pupils, their families and staff and the interim executive board is providing a good level of challenge. In tandem, they monitor the work of the school thoroughly, with a very strong focus on providing pupils with their entitlement to make progress in line with national expectations and to make up for any underachievement. Teachers have been set high expectations and given good professional support. The next step is for the leadership team to ensure that their strategies enable teachers to have greater ownership for their own development, lesson planning and in evaluating the progress of their own pupils.

School action plans are detailed but there are too many of them that overlap. All of the required checks are in place to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children but the single central record of these checks does not meet the current government requirements because not all of the required information is on the record. In addition, the child protection policy is out of date.

External support

At the time of submission, the local authority's statement of action was deemed by Ofsted to require amendment because it lacked some of the required detail. The plan has been sensibly revised and is now incorporated into the school development plan. The school values the support that the local authority has brokered through City Challenge and the partner school. This has helped teachers to reflect on their own practice. The school uses external support well to moderate the judgements that it makes. During the two periods of staff restructuring, the school has benefitted from good support from the local authority's human resources service.

Priorities for further improvement

There are no additional priorities for the school to consider at this time.