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28 November 2014

Mrs Emma Lane
Executive Headteacher
Leigh Beck Infant School and Nursery
Point Road
Canvey Island
Essex
SS8 7TD

Dear Mrs Lane

Special measures monitoring inspection of Leigh Beck Infant School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 26–27 November 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 6–7 November 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Essex.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2013

- Eliminate inadequate teaching and make all teaching at least good, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use accurate information on pupils' progress to set work at the right level of difficulty, especially to stretch the more-able pupils
 - all staff have the training they need to be able to teach reading and writing effectively
 - teaching is consistently challenging and activities move at a brisk pace, to keep all pupils engaged and focused on learning
 - pupils' books are marked regularly and accurately to help pupils learn from their mistakes.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by:
 - providing lessons which engage and interest the pupils
 - ensuring that pupils are supervised well at breaktimes
 - dealing effectively with inappropriate behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes
 - keeping formal records of incidents of inappropriate behaviour
 - working with parents to improve the level of attendance.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - the school's self-evaluation is accurate and is based on rigorous and well-focused monitoring
 - the quality of teaching and learning is assessed accurately, taking into account the impact teaching is having on pupils' progress
 - there are rigorous systems for developing teachers' expertise and improving the quality of teaching.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 26–27 November 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and a wide range of pupils' work and met with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders from the academy sponsor school, the interim executive board (IEB), the local authority school excellence commissioner (SEC) and the head of school improvement.

Context

Two teachers are leaving the school at Christmas. Eight new support staff have joined the school. There is a new senior leadership team.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the executive headteacher and senior leaders from the academy sponsor school, Northwick Park, have been unrelenting in their efforts to improve pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 has improved dramatically, with some pupils making a year's progress in a term in reading and mathematics. This is also the case for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those who are eligible for pupil premium. There is no gap between the progress these pupils make and other pupils in the school. Progress in writing is less consistent. Although pupils are writing more in their literacy lessons, they are not getting enough opportunities to write in other subjects, such as history and geography.

Since the last monitoring inspection, new national attainment data for Key Stage 1 has been published. This indicates that pupils are doing less well than similar pupils nationally. This is because teachers have not had sufficient time to fill the gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and help them to catch up with other pupils of their age.

The Nursery and Reception classes have been transformed since the last monitoring inspection. There are new teachers in all classes and, in the Nursery, the building has been refurbished. As a result, children are making good progress and most are on track to achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception Year.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has improved beyond recognition across the whole school since the section 5 inspection because all inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Teachers and assistant headteachers from the academy sponsor school have replaced those teachers who left the school. The robust focus on ensuring that learning is planned

to challenge and interest pupils has had an impressive impact on pupils' progress in every class. For example, by introducing ability sets for teaching mathematics in Years 1 and 2, teachers have been able to identify the gaps in pupils' learning due to inadequate teaching in the past, rapidly fill these gaps and move learning forward. Work in pupils' books and the school's own data show that this is having a huge impact on improving the progress all groups of pupils make, including those eligible for pupil premium and the most able.

Teaching assistants give good support in all lessons. Since the last monitoring inspection, all have been trained in the new programme for teaching phonics (the sounds letters make) and they are teaching their small groups well. The teacher who leads this programme keeps a very close check on pupils' progress and makes sure that they move on to more challenging work as soon as they are ready.

Marking in pupils' books continues to improve as pupils are given time to make improvements based on the teachers' advice. Handwriting and presentation of work are not as neat as they could be because pupils do not always use a ruler to draw straight lines and teachers do not model neat joined writing when they write their pink and green comments, marking pupils' work. A new home-school handwriting policy has recently been introduced so that parents can help their children to form letters correctly.

At the last monitoring inspection, the provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes was inadequate. This has been completely turned around thanks to skilful and inspirational teaching, and the excellent refurbishment of the Nursery. Nursery children were enthralled by the prospect of seeing what would happen if Humpty Dumpty's egg friends were dropped from a great height. In Reception, all the children were thrilled to be using their phonics skills to write words to describe snow because they wanted Olaf, a cartoon snowman character, to read their ideas.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in and around the school, at lunchtime and on the playground, is good. Pupils show respect for all adults and they are kind to each other. Pupils behave well in lessons because they are inspired by the learning activities teachers plan for them. They are very enthusiastic about learning and love coming to school. The school has updated their single central record so that it includes all the information required on staff and other adults who work with the children.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The exceptional leadership of the headteacher of the sponsor school and her senior leadership team has transformed Leigh Beck from a school that was failing to one that is thriving and vibrant, where all children now make good and sometimes outstanding progress. The deputy headteacher works very effectively with the new

senior leadership team, particularly in her role as leader for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Her extensive review of the special educational needs register means that pupils are getting the support they need with their learning or physical development. Rigorous tracking of pupils' learning by teachers and senior leaders ensures that gaps in pupils' learning are rapidly identified and filled.

Subject leaders from the academy sponsor school have made sure that all new curriculum and assessment requirements are in place.

The IEB provide good governance for the school and has supported the executive headteacher well in making sure that the building work in the Nursery was completed in time for children to start in September. The governors of the sponsor school rightly raised concerns about how long it is taking to secure the change to an academy for Leigh Beck. The IEB has done everything it can to accelerate this process.

External support

The local authority school improvement service has given good support to the school. The Standards and Excellence Commissioners have monitored the quality of teaching and learning to check that the school's own judgements about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching are accurate. This has been most helpful to middle and senior leaders. It confirmed that their judgements are accurate.

The local authority and Department of Education have not worked decisively enough to make sure the school can become an academy. As a result, this process is taking longer than usual. The school cannot be removed from special measures until this is resolved because, without the sponsorship of Northwick Park, the school does not have the capacity to sustain the huge improvements it has made.

Priority for further improvement:

- Work with the local authority and Department of Education to resolve, as a matter of urgency, the issues holding back further partnership working between Northwick Park and Leigh Beck.