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Miss Jenkins
Riverside Primary School
Ferry Road
Hullbridge
Hockley
SS5 6ND

Dear Miss Jenkins

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Riverside Primary School

Following my visit with Florence Olajide, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25–26 April 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 2 November 2011. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed; however, HMI will consider revising this judgement when new school improvement partnership arrangements are finalised.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Essex.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2011

- Ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that compliance with the school's safeguarding policies is monitored carefully.

By October 2012 build the school's capacity to improve by:

- improving the school's long-term strategic vision, including that for the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that the school's priorities are widely shared and all staff are held to account for pupils' outcomes
- involving leaders and managers at all levels, and the governing body, in drawing up a sharply focused short-term development plan, linked to measurable outcomes in pupils' achievement and with clear lines of accountability
- ensuring all staff and members of the governing body are clear about what needs to be done to secure rapid improvement
- implementing a cycle of rigorous self-evaluation to provide clear information about the school's successes and areas for improvement
- enabling members of the governing body to participate more fully in supporting and challenging the school.

By October 2012 enhance the rate of pupils' progress and raise attainment, especially in English and mathematics by:

- providing motivating curriculum experiences that give pupils a clear sense of purpose and enjoyment for writing
- using extended writing to accurately apply the technical skills of spelling, grammar and the development of a fluent joined script
- giving clear guidance to staff about the knowledge, skills and understanding pupils should acquire across the curriculum, but especially in English and mathematics as they move through the school
- reviewing the current arrangements for withdrawing pupils from lessons so they spend more time learning with their class.

By October 2012 raise the quality of teaching throughout the school by:

- raising expectations of what pupils can do, and providing more challenging work
- ensuring pupils are always clear about what they are expected to learn
- using assessment information frequently to plan and adapt work so that it consistently meets the needs of pupils of differing abilities
- giving clear feedback in lessons and when marking pupils' work so that they are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

By October 2012 improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:

- raising the knowledge and understanding of staff of the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework
- improving the provision for learning, both indoors and outdoors
- providing a wide range of engaging learning activities that help children acquire a firm foundation for literacy skills
- presenting challenging play activities that enable children to count and solve problems
- offering greater opportunities for children to use their initiative and make decisions for themselves
- using assessment more effectively to plan children's learning.

Ensure that pupils develop a better understanding of the lifestyles, cultures and religions that represent the diversity of society in the United Kingdom.

Special measures: monitoring of Riverside Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 25–26 April 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised the pupils' work, listened to pupils read, evaluated the school's current assessment data and, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority, and nominated staff. HMI conducted a staff meeting.

Context

The deputy headteacher was on leave of absence at the time of the inspection and has not yet returned to school. A very experienced local authority school improvement adviser joined the senior leadership team on a part-time contract, at the beginning of the summer term 2012.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2011 validated results of the Key Stage 1 and 2 national assessments detail the many significant weaknesses in pupils' achievement and standards recorded by the previous inspection report. They show, in particular, the weaknesses in the pupils' performance in mathematics in the Key Stage 1 teacher assessments and in the proportion of pupils in Key Stage 2 who failed to secure the standards expected at age 11. Within these overall weaknesses, the gap between boys' and girls' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was greater than the national average, and the progress of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs was below the relevant national average. At Key Stage 2, attainment in reading and mathematics was below average and that in writing was significantly below average. Achievement, from Key Stage 1 to 2, was significantly below the national figure and the proportion of pupils who failed to make the expected progress in English and mathematics was a concern.

The local authority's review of progress in March 2012 indicates that a higher percentage of children in Year 6 are on track to meet age-related expectations in reading and mathematics, although attainment in writing remains a concern; this view concurs with the evidence gathered by inspectors. Currently, pupils in Year 6 are making above-average progress in reading as a result of improvements secured in the quality of teaching, and a higher proportion are already working at age-related expectations than in 2011. Inspectors noted good progress in half of the six Year 5/6 lessons visited.

There is some evidence that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage made above-average progress in mathematics in 2011 and these children have continued to do well since moving into Year 1, where good teaching was observed. However, children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains inconsistent as a direct result of weak leadership and inadequate teaching.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- By October 2012 enhance the rate of pupils' progress and raise attainment, especially in English and mathematics – **satisfactory**
- By October 2012 improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage – **inadequate**

The quality of teaching

Teaching has improved steadily since the last inspection, although one in five lessons was found to be inadequate during this visit. However, the proportion of good teaching has also improved and, during this inspection, one in three lessons was judged to be effective because the pupils made good progress.

In the best lessons seen, tasks were well planned, questioning was skilful and learning was driven forward at a brisk pace by precise instruction. Class teachers and the learning support assistants worked well together to maintain a challenging dialogue with pupils. In an effective Year 5/6 English lesson, well-judged questions from the teacher and a consistent emphasis on pupils reading their work aloud to the class generated competition, greater accuracy by pupils, and higher-level reading skills. Similarly, in a good Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils worked well on challenging tasks related to mean, mode, range, and average because the task was clearly explained. Pupils were given appropriate time to complete the task and the teacher and the support assistant team provided effective direction and support.

In those lessons judged to be satisfactory, the pace and challenge provided was too slow; too much time was spent in discussions that would have been appropriate if they had been short and to the point. In these lessons, the time available for the pupils to write or the level of written work required was too limited to allow pupils to make good progress. In too many of these lessons, pupils had insufficient opportunities to write. In some lessons, the challenge provided in the last quarter of the lesson did not match the pupils' learning needs.

Where teaching was found to be inadequate, pupils made too little progress because too much time was taken by teachers' talk and not enough opportunity provided for pupils to show what they knew, understood and could do. Lesson planning was weak and failed to provide an appropriate challenge. This weak planning resulted in silly behaviour from pupils which was allowed to degenerate into disengagement.

Inspectors observed 17 lessons and provided professional feedback to all teachers; almost all of those selected for a second observation improved their performance.

A great deal has been done to improve the learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of support and staff training by the local authority. However, too much unstructured play and a lack of adult-directed learning remain a concern and, where taught sessions developed, opportunities were missed to enhance the children's communication, language and literacy skills. During this inspection, two thirds of the teaching observed in the Early Years Foundation Stage was found to be inadequate.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection

- By October 2012 raise the quality of teaching throughout the school - **satisfactory**.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance remains above the national average and behaviour was disappointing only where the weakest teaching was observed. The pupils' attitude to work was a positive factor in almost every lesson and they were pleased to show their work to inspectors or read it aloud to the class when asked to by their teacher. Social interaction and the pupils' movement around the school during the inspection, when significant stormy weather was experienced, were good.

The previous inspection report noted serious child-protection issues related to the recently completed school website. This matter was dealt with promptly and is no longer an issue. The school's single central record and staff recruitment procedures are exemplary.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that compliance with the school's safeguarding policies is monitored carefully – **good**

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Improvements have been secured in the quality of teaching and in the rate of pupils' progress although there remains a great deal to do in both cases to meet the criteria for good progress. However, the contribution of the Early Years Foundation Stage to the school improvement process is inadequate. The monitoring of teaching is accurate and HMI invited senior leaders to join inspectors in the evaluation of teaching; the observations they made concurred with the judgements given by inspectors.

School improvement plans are constantly being revised and the ideas being considered to introduce the September 2012 timetable and class structure before the end of the summer term are well-conceived. The headteacher understands what has to be done and is responding well to the support provided by the very experienced local authority colleague who has joined the senior leadership team on a part-time basis.

Useful work on curriculum revision by phase leaders has enhanced the examples used to support work on the diversity of society in the United Kingdom. HMI will review the work of phase leaders during the autumn term inspection visit and will provide opportunities for them to join the monitoring and evaluation of teaching.

Good use has been made of local authority consultants and the work of an advanced skills teacher assigned to the school. This support has been very well received and respected by all staff. The governing body acted effectively in supervising the closure of inappropriate content on the school's website and has a clear view of their need to act as a critical friend to the headteacher. The governing body has identified that the school's budget will move into deficit this financial year and there are plans to manage this with local authority support; governors have noted it will be important to retain the services of the seconded local authority officer for the autumn term in order to allow the part-time deputy headteacher to reintegrate herself to the school improvement process following her leave of absence. The governing body has begun to consider the need to restructure the senior leadership team.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Ensure that pupils develop a better understanding of the lifestyles, cultures and religions that represent the diversity of society in the United Kingdom – **satisfactory**.
- By October 2012 build the school's capacity to improve – **satisfactory**

External support

Good support has been provided by the local authority at a time when it has been undergoing considerable reorganisation, derived from a good statement of action. Effective school reviews have provided accurate information of the school improvement process, consultant support has been effective and an excellent decision was made to second an experienced local authority adviser to the school on a part-time basis; this decision is already proving its worth.

The allocation of a Local Leader of Education from the National College of School Leadership has not been as successful as hoped in enhancing the pace of change.

The consideration being given to reallocating this support to a colleague with particular experience of the Early Years Foundation Stage is well conceived.

Priority for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency, secure improvement in the leadership and teaching provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage.