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27 September 2012

Mrs K Melling
Leyland Methodist Junior School
Canberra Road
Leyland
Lancashire
PR25 3ET

Dear Mrs Melling,

Special measures monitoring inspection of Leyland Methodist Junior School

Following my visit with Vanessa MacDonald, additional inspector, to your school on 25-26 September, 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2012. 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.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2012.

- Improve achievement in English so that pupils of all abilities make at least expected progress by:
 - matching learning to pupils' different needs so they build sequentially on their prior learning
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to use their writing and reading skills across the curriculum
 - widening the breadth of reading to include fiction and non-fiction texts that enable pupils to acquire skills of inference and deduction
 - using reading journals purposefully, ensuring they are regularly marked and show pupils what they do well and what they should improve.

- Raise attainment for more-able pupils so they reach the higher levels in English and mathematics by:
 - raising expectations and providing consistently challenging teaching based on accurate assessments of pupils' needs
 - ensuring tracking information is used to identify and address any underachievement
 - widening opportunities for learning in practical ways that extend pupils' thinking and investigative skills.

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that the majority is good or better and none is inadequate by:
 - ensuring assessment informs planning for learning so that pupils' work is relevant to their different needs and abilities
 - ensuring lessons challenge all pupils, especially the more-able pupils
 - marking pupils' work in a timely and regular manner so they understand what they do well and what they should improve
 - implementing learning targets that are shared with pupils, understood by them, and reviewed regularly
 - using time effectively so lessons begin promptly and move at a brisk pace to engage all pupils.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - establishing a leadership structure with clear roles for all leaders, but particularly middle and subject leaders, that focuses on tackling the most significant weaknesses
 - establishing regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching, and its impact on achievement over time, including lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussion with pupils about their personal targets
 - convening regular meetings to review pupils' progress and acting on the information to arrest any underachievement

PROTECT-INSPECTION



- ensuring performance management holds teachers to account for pupils' progress
- providing training in assessment and the teaching of reading and writing
- ensuring that the governing body has first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
- ensuring parents and carers are well-informed about teaching, learning and the curriculum.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 25-26 September 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the senior leadership team, two groups of pupils, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors observed thirteen lessons two of which were joint observations with members of the leadership team.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the long-standing deputy headteacher left the school and the governing body appointed a new deputy headteacher who started in September. A teacher retired at the end of the summer term and the hours of two part-time teachers were changed. One teacher has been absent since the start of September.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the inspection standards of attainment have risen and are now higher in English than in mathematics across the school. There was a significant rise in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 by the end of Year 6 and the higher Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics. A greater proportion of pupils made the two levels progress expected of them between the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2012.

Reading in particular has improved. Pupils make better use of reading journals to identify the work of authors; the features of different types of fiction and non-fiction books; and some of the features of characters within books. Pupils' work indicates there are some missed opportunities when they explain the reasons for their inferences and deductions to point to evidence within the text. Consequently more-able pupils are still not being challenged as much as they could to explain their reasoning fully in their reading comprehension. Although most pupils were able to decode text when they read using phonics (letters and the sounds they make) there is less improvement in their use of expression and intonation.

Pupils' writing skills still lag behind their reading skills but there are signs of improvement. In one lesson a teacher helped pupils to identify some good words, phrases and features of writing which would help them improve their own stories. There are more opportunities for pupils to write outside of English lessons, for example in science and in topic lessons but the quality of writing is not as strong as it is in English lessons.

In lessons, pupils' progress is faster in English than it is in mathematics. Pupils' build on their prior skills better and there is more progression from lesson to lesson and within lessons to enable pupils to increase their knowledge and consolidate their

skills. In one English lesson for example pupils built on and applied their understanding of figurative language such as similes and metaphors and increasingly became more adept at identifying and writing metaphors. In mathematics however this is not the case. Pupils' progress slows because the work is either too easy or too challenging for them. Some pupils' work for example indicated pages of correct answers and a clear understanding of the concept. They continued with more examples written in the same style without moving onto a more difficult level of mathematics. Similarly pupils' progress was hampered and slowed because they had to complete easier work than they already had shown they could do. The school needs as soon as possible to implement the findings of Ofsted's surveys into mathematics "mathematics: made to measure"

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/mathematics-made-measure> and "understanding the score" <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/mathematics-understanding-score>

The quality of teaching

Since the inspection, school and local authority data indicate an improvement in the quality of teaching. In particular the frequency and quality of marking has improved. Books are marked more regularly and teachers make useful comments to pupils. In the best cases pupils are given time to respond, correct and improve their work before starting the next lesson. In less strong cases pupils cannot read the teacher's marking and the time teachers take to make comments is wasted because pupils have no chance to respond. Although targets for improvement have been set and pupils are shown what to do to achieve the lesson objective there is too wide a variety of practice between classes and between year groups. In addition the teaching does not relate tightly enough to the targets and what pupils need to learn next. As a priority the school needs to simplify and clarify its procedures for setting targets and ensure they are consistently applied. Similarly the school needs to ensure that activities and teaching enables all pupils to make progress towards their targets.

Since the inspection in April 2012 lessons have started on time and there is a greater pace to pupils' learning. The structure of lessons is effective in enabling pupils to learn but time is wasted, for example in writing down learning objectives, pupils sharing their individual work to the rest of the class, and sitting listening to the teacher ask questions to individual pupils. In the better lessons, talking partners, individual whiteboards and other resources are used to help all pupils answer every question rather than only a few pupils answering a question in thirty minutes and the rest of the class listening.

A priority for the school is to ensure teachers plan lessons that are based on the needs of groups of pupils rather than on commercial or published schemes of work. There needs to be quicker improvement in challenging more-able pupils because the

work is too easy or because teachers' questions do not develop pupils' higher skills and knowledge.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Since the inspection the staff have reviewed and implemented a new behaviour policy and procedure. The system is based on positive reinforcement rather than too many sanctions for minor misdemeanours. The good aspects of pupils' behaviour were again apparent to inspectors during this inspection. Pupils are as polite, friendly and respectful as they were previously.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The quality of governance has improved since the inspection. Governors have the information they need to be able to positively challenge the school and they have established a new committee to oversee standards and the school's improvement against the issues identified in the school's Ofsted inspection report. Their work is now effective. They have greater access to the school to gather first-hand understanding of teaching and of pupils' achievement. There is still a way to go to improve their challenge and support to middle leaders within the school and their knowledge about improvements in different subjects.

Governors have recently become more positive about their role as they consider that relationships with other key stakeholders have begun to improve. The governors have also approved and established a new system of managing the performance of staff.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of how teaching impacts on learning and on what teachers need to do to improve. This now needs to be spread amongst other middle leaders and then on to all subject leaders to better self-evaluate and monitor the areas they lead. Action plans are detailed and have challenging targets and well-crafted actions for improvement. Since the inspection, the headteacher and governors established a clear structure for leadership. One senior leader oversees the work of the lower juniors the other the upper juniors. Middle leader posts have been restructured and clarified as has the role of teaching assistants in the afternoon sessions. The headteacher has established a system for frequent and regular monitoring of teaching including meetings to review the progress of pupils, pupil interviews, work scrutiny and lesson observation.

Since the inspection there have been improvements to communication with and involvement of parents and carers. The headteacher has changed the process of parent evenings to provide more time to discuss pupils' progress and to enable parents and carers to have access to pupils' work. The annual report to parents was improved. The headteacher has begun to invite parents into school more often and for example has liaised with the local church to hold events so that more parents can attend. There is still some way to go for example to improve the quality of the

website and newsletters to have better information about what pupils are doing in each class.

External support

The governors and staff indicated past difficulties with the support from the local authority particularly in the lengthy time taken to resolve issues between staff and the lack of action to improve the quality of teaching. Now, however the local authority is providing good support for the school. Advisors, consultants and local authority departments are helping to improve the teaching of English, extend the capacity of the school to improve, and to provide help with managing the performance of staff. The local authority action plan was deemed to be fit for purpose by Ofsted and the plan contains challenging targets and tight timeline towards the removal of special measures.