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13 December 2012

Linda Adams
Executive headteacher
Lansdowne School
Argyll Close
Dalyell Road
London
SW9 9QL

Dear Ms Adams

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lansdowne School

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 December 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Lambeth.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by fully responding to the conclusions of the strategic review of personnel, roles and responsibilities in order to build capacity and bring about improvements in the outcomes for pupils.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers always:
 - use a wide range of approaches and strategies to fully motivate all pupils
 - clearly identify in their planning the needs of individual pupils and how they will be challenged, and in lessons use this information to drive forward pupils' learning
 - consistently use the newly developed behaviour management systems and strategies.

- Improve pupils' communication skills by:
 - formalising and applying a clear policy for teachers' use of signing and pictorial strategies across the curriculum
 - ensuring that reading sessions at the start of the day are used consistently well
 - addressing the weaknesses older pupils have in the methods and strategies they use to decode and synthesise words.

- Ensure there is greater accuracy in the assessments teachers make about pupils' progress.

Special measures: monitoring of Lansdowne School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 December 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed 12 lessons, all of which were jointly observed with senior leaders. A series of short visits were made to reading sessions in each class at the start of the day. In total, 12 teachers were observed. The inspector scrutinised documents such as lesson planning, monitoring records and progress tracking as well as records of interim executive board meetings and local authority visits. He held meetings with the executive headteacher, members of the leadership team and a representative from the local authority. He also held a telephone discussion with a representative from the interim executive board.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, the restructuring of the staff team has been completed. Nine teachers, including the head of school and other senior staff, have left the school. Permanent appointments have now been made to replace these staff. Long-term agency staff are employed to fill the remaining vacancies created by the restructure and changes to the curriculum offered by the school. The executive headteacher and membership of the interim executive board remain unchanged.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' rates of progress have improved strongly since the previous monitoring visit. More rigorous and accurate checking of information on pupils' progress is ensuring that teachers consistently plan work that is well matched to pupils' abilities. This is helping to accelerate pupils' progress because the work they are given is now appropriately demanding. This ensures that they neither struggle with work that is too difficult or lose interest with work that is too easy.

Reading sessions are consistently more effective across the school. The quality of planning has improved well. Accurate knowledge of pupils' current levels of achievement in reading ensures that lessons are well focused on what they need to do to improve. Teachers and additional adults are increasingly confident and competent in teaching reading using the sounds that letters make because training and support have been effective. This is now helping to address more rapidly the weaknesses that older pupils have in reading and spelling unfamiliar words.

The use of pictorial representation as part of the school's 'total communication' policy is becoming well established. Written resources are now regularly produced using symbol-supported text. This is ensuring that pupils can access the improved

curriculum and communicate their learning and understanding more effectively than before. The learning environment uses pictorial communication with greater consistency and has helped to make classrooms brighter and more inviting.

Staff have now received training in using the school's chosen signed language system. This has helped them to become more confident communicators. However, signing is not yet used consistently in all classrooms and pupils are not routinely encouraged to sign to help them develop their skills.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve pupils' communication skills – good.

The quality of teaching

The new appointments made to the teaching team mean that the most significant changes to the quality of teaching have taken place since September 2012. New staff have responded well to focused training which has ensured that they have a common understanding of the routines, procedures and teaching methods used at the school. As a result, there is much greater consistency in the way teachers prepare and deliver lessons.

Assessment routines are better established, although still at an early stage of development. Nevertheless, teachers now use their knowledge of pupils' achievements more effectively when planning lessons. This is helping them to identify appropriate learning objectives for groups of different abilities in each lesson. In the most effective lessons, teachers make clear in their planning how additional adults will help individual pupils to reach their objectives by being very specific about the actions they will take and the support they will give.

The pace of learning has improved well. Teachers plan lessons that give pupils the chance to change activities and reflect on their learning more frequently. This is improving pupils' engagement and motivation. More practical activities are being incorporated into lessons, such as making models of castles in lessons about medieval history, demonstrating that teachers are now taking better account of pupils' different preferences and learning styles.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – good.
- Ensure there is greater accuracy in the assessments teachers make about pupils' progress – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Improvements in the quality of teaching, and consequently in pupils' engagement and motivation, have contributed well to purposeful learning environments being

maintained across the school. In the most effective lessons, teachers and additional adults make regular reference to the school's expectations of behaviour, and pupils usually respond well.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The leadership team has been strengthened by the permanent appointment of two new assistant headteachers and subject leaders for English and mathematics. These experienced staff have contributed strongly to the improvement in teaching. They model high quality practice in communicating with pupils, planning effective lessons and assessing pupils' work accurately. The executive headteacher has delegated appropriate day-to-day responsibilities to these staff and is now able to direct all her efforts into the strategic leadership and development of the school. The interim executive board continues to provide active support to the leadership team and has an accurate view of the rate of improvement being made.

Regular formal and informal monitoring continues and has been supplemented by an effective coaching programme to help develop consistently good or better teaching from all members of staff. The accurate evaluations made by senior staff are used well to provide support that is highly focused on the aspects of teaching that are most in need of improvement. Recently appointed teachers, most of whom come from mainstream backgrounds, have benefited from training and on-going support in meeting the needs of pupils with a range of special educational needs. There is now sufficient capacity within the leadership team, in conjunction with the federation partnership school and local authority, to support the appointment of newly qualified teachers.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by fully responding to the conclusions of the strategic review of personnel, roles and responsibilities in order to build capacity and bring about improvements in the outcomes for pupils – good.

External support

The local authority and the federation partnership school are providing good support. Regular visits from the school's improvement adviser are supporting the leadership team in monitoring the quality of teaching and providing training to staff. The federation partnership school continues to provide opportunities for Lansdowne staff to observe high quality practice and work with experienced special educational needs professionals.