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15 February 2013

Mrs K Melling  
Headteacher  
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 on 13 and 14 February 2013, 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 second 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 Executive Director for Children & Young People 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

- 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 are well informed about teaching, learning and the curriculum.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13-14 February 2013.**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed parts of 10 lessons. He met with the subject leaders for science and for able, gifted and talented pupils, senior leaders and a group of more-able pupils. He held discussions with representatives from the local authority and the governing body. The inspector analysed the work in some pupils' mathematics books. The focus for this monitoring inspection was the quality of teaching, mainly in mathematics, and the achievement of more-able pupils.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit in September 2012 the deputy headteacher, who had only started work at the beginning of September, resigned. She was absent for a number of weeks and then left the school in December. A teacher who is a specialist in teaching mathematics was seconded from another school after the visit. She started supporting the school in the autumn term for two days a week. After Christmas she became the full-time acting deputy headteacher and is teaching the previous deputy headteacher's class until the end of July. The teacher in charge of leading mathematics is on long-term absence due to illness and has not yet returned to the school. In her absence the acting deputy is leading the subject.

After the last monitoring visit two teachers were seconded from local schools but they had to return to their own schools at the end of December.

After Christmas an assistant deputy headteacher started work at Leyland Methodist. She is seconded from a local school until July.

The teacher absent on long-term sick leave at the time of the last visit resigned and left the school in the autumn term. A teacher who held a position of responsibility and leadership in the school reduced her hours of work and gave up her responsibility at the start of January. Another teacher reduced her hours from full time to part time and now works only in the mornings.

Two governors resigned their positions. A teaching assistant left at Christmas and the governors appointed a new clerical assistant to work in the school office.

There have been many meetings discussing the possibility of transferring to an academy. In November last year the governing body decided against this option.

## **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Standards are rising in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for the more-able pupils. Right from the start of lessons in English and mathematics the majority of teachers cater for this group of pupils much better. For example, in one mathematics lesson more-able pupils had an initial challenge to work on while the teacher taught the rest of the class about fractions, which this group could already do. When the other pupils had started work the teacher then taught the more-able group to extend and deepen their thinking and to give them more challenging work which was better matched to the next steps in their learning. This style of teaching was typical in Years 5 and 6 and it is in these two year groups that these pupils are quickening their progress and are now reaching higher levels.

In Year 6 the thrice-weekly higher-level guided reading sessions are increasing pupils' understanding of different forms of literature. Year 6 pupils who attend the weekly after-school mathematics club talked about how they have extended their problem-solving skills and knowledge of algebra and of higher-level mathematical concepts.

Pupils are making better progress in mathematics and their attainment is rising. Their ability to use and apply mathematics, in particular, is improving, as is their ability to make connections between different parts of mathematics, for example connecting division facts with multiplication facts and connecting addition with subtraction ( $78+59=137$ ;  $137-59=78$ ;  $137-78=59$ ). Pupils have improved in their ability to use known facts to find out unknown facts. In one class, for example, pupils quickly and successfully found 10% of a quantity when calculating problems from a pie chart. They then used this successfully to find out 15%, 5% and 35%.

Pupils who have special educational needs, according to the school's data, pupils' work and observations in lessons, are making less progress and their achievement is not improving as fast as their peers. This is because they are sometimes 'spoon-fed' and shown how to complete the tasks and how to answer the questions rather than being encouraged to think for themselves.

## **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has improved, particularly in Years 5 and 6. For example, in the majority of lessons, pupils now have the opportunity at the start of the lesson to recap on previous learning and to respond to the teachers' marking and feedback. However, this practice is not consistent in all lessons. The quality of the marking has improved, particularly in mathematics, and pupils are also more knowledgeable about what they need to do to improve their work or reach their targets.

There are more opportunities for pupils to be fully involved in their learning. In the majority of classes pupils are more active in their learning, for example writing answers on whiteboards, explaining their thinking to talking partners and answering all the questions posed by the teacher. However, there is still some work to do to

make sure this is effective use of time and that maximum involvement of all pupils is a feature of all lessons.

The quality of the tasks pupils are asked to complete has improved. While in some lessons pupils still had overly long lists of word problems or calculations to complete, in other lessons the activities have improved so that pupils solve mathematical problems which increase their understanding. In one lesson in Year 5, for example, pupils converted and used different measures of length to plan a sponsored walk around the school. The task enabled pupils to convert different units of length, add and subtract using measures and to use their thinking in a real-life situation.

Since the monitoring inspection in September 2012 there has been reasonable progress in teaching. The majority of teachers model and explain what they are teaching better, teach more-able pupils better, involve pupils more, speak less and have improved the structure of lessons. There is still some way to go, however, to eradicate inadequate teaching and to make sure the teaching in a majority of lessons is good.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

A pupil commented, and others agreed, 'The atmosphere in the school is better, everyone is happier.' There is a more positive ethos in the school which has led to some improvements in pupils' behaviour. In classes with a better quality of teaching and a higher level of pupil involvement pupils are on task, keen to learn, not worried about making errors and have improved attitudes to working. In one example, despite snow coming down heavily and being blown ferociously against the windows by the wind, every pupil was focused on the teacher, excited by the mathematics tasks they had been given and absorbed in their learning so much that they paid no attention to the snow.

This level of engagement is not present in all classes. In some classes pupils rock backwards on chairs, engage in low-level chatter while waiting for the teacher to ask them a question and show little interest in the tasks they have been given to complete. Where behaviour is managed less effectively, teachers continually 'shh' pupils during lessons or unnecessarily make an issue of minor misdemeanours, shattering pupils' confidence and esteem.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Improvement in the leadership and management of the school has been slow. It has been significantly hampered by the resignation of the deputy headteacher after only a few weeks in the job and the other senior leader being absent. This has meant the headteacher having again to take responsibility for leading English and coordinating special educational needs. The acting deputy headteacher has helped by leading developments in mathematics and stabilising teaching in Year 6.

There have been a few improvements in the leadership of subjects. The leader for gifted, able and talented pupils, for example, has visited lessons, analysed data, looked at pupils' work, liaised with other schools and has started to lead on this aspect in school. Other aspects of subject leadership remain underdeveloped and a priority for improvement. The quality of teaching has been improved because frequent monitoring by the headteacher is matched to training opportunities or work with local authority consultants.

Another significant barrier to improvement has been the amount of time the headteacher has been involved in the discussions about transferring to an academy. Given the headteacher has been without a deputy headteacher or any senior leader for most of the autumn term her time has been too stretched. Lengthy and time-consuming meetings with parents, unions, staff and external agencies have taken leaders' and governors' focus away from school improvement and building capacity to improve within the school.

The governing body has taken a more active role within the school. Governors have observed lessons, looked at pupils' work in books and met half-termly to look at pupils' achievement. They have also started to meet with some subject leaders and have established a working committee to improve communication with parents.

### **External support**

The local authority support has been extensive, comprehensive and highly effective in maintaining some stability in the school. Training for governors in how to interpret data about pupils' achievement has enabled governors to challenge the school better and understand where resources should be deployed. It has also led to greater vision, ambition and greater involvement in the school and has improved governors' oversight of the quality of what the school does. The local authority's mathematics consultant has led extensive training in mathematics which has improved the quality of teaching in mathematics and pupils' achievement. One-to-one work with a local authority teaching consultant has helped individual teachers to improve their practice.

The school remains heavily reliant on external support because the headteacher's time is too stretched and because of instability in staffing. Local headteachers have provided extensive support by seconding teachers to stabilise teaching, by providing teachers to act as role models and coaches for existing staff and by providing advice and expertise.