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Jacqueline Treacy
Interim headteacher
Edgware Junior School
Heming Road
Edgware
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Dear Ms Treacy

Special measures monitoring inspection of Edgware Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 7 February 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 recent section 5 inspection.

This was the first monitoring visit since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection in November 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher members of the senior team, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority. Brief visits were made to all classrooms and the inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including a sample of pupils' work and safeguarding information. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Following the inspection the substantive headteacher left the school. In January an interim headteacher was appointed for two terms. One teacher is on maternity leave and the class has been taught by different agency staff. There are two newly qualified teachers.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Following the inspection, governors took swift action an interim headteacher was recruited for January. Senior and middle leaders report a stronger sense of purpose in the school since her appointment. In the first weeks of term she has prioritised raising expectations in school; all teachers have been observed in lessons and they have agreed areas for improvement. Partnership links have been established with Barnfield School, where the headteacher is a local leader of education. Teachers, accompanied by a senior leader, have visited this and other outstanding schools to jointly observe lessons that model practice in the teachers' identified area for development. The support programme includes on-going visits and peer observations between both schools.

Since the inspection, governors have evaluated their effectiveness. They are committed to improving their overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have audited their skills, consulted with staff and parents and considered options for the school's future. Governors ensured that the external review of governance was completed quickly. They have begun to act on the four urgent recommendations. As the federated governing body for Edgware Infant School as well, greater clarification is required about how it fulfils its strategic function efficiently for both schools, each with different priorities.

The review of pupil premium funding has not yet occurred. The financial breakdown allocates significant resource to staffing costs that are not directly linked to pupils' attainment or well-being. School documentation shows internal exclusions, poor attendance, low attainment and safeguarding concerns for vulnerable pupils who are eligible for support through this funding. Accountability for improved pupil outcomes by staff and external agencies through the additional funding is weak.

The school improvement plan is not fit for purpose. It was drafted by the deputy headteacher without governor involvement. No reference is made to targets for either improved pupil progress or higher attainment in English and mathematics. No identification is made of underperforming pupil groups or agreed milestones when intended improvements will be measured. The monitoring activity is limited, with an overemphasis on lesson observations and planning scrutiny. Currently, school leaders judge most teaching as inadequate so the success criteria for over half to be judged 'good' by Easter 2014 is unrealistic. Senior leaders and governors acknowledge the inadequacy of the current plan. It should be redrafted as a matter of urgency.

The implication of this weak school improvement plan is further exacerbated as the local authority statement of action asserts that this school document forms the basis of a joint school and local authority plan.

The local authority statement of action record is incomplete. The statement does not refer to the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. No specific actions are linked to these areas or time scales by which improvements are to be expected. There is no reference to pupil performance data or expected targets to demonstrate rapidly improving pupil achievement. No additional resources have been allocated by the local authority and there is no link to a financial plan for how the school will use its budget to meet the issues arising from the inspection. The statement of action refers to a one-year plan only, which is too short a term. It states an expectation that the school will be removed from special measures within the year. This is unrealistic given poor strategic planning and temporary leadership.

Since the inspection the local authority network inspector has increased the frequency of visits to school. These focus on stabilising the school's leadership, training for members of the governing body and moderating senior leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. However, this support is not informed by a coherent local authority strategic plan. The local authority, senior leaders and governors have agreed to reassess their shared responsibilities for overseeing and monitoring the school's improvement as a result of this monitoring visit.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Ann Debono

Her Majesty's Inspector