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Mr David Lloyd
Executive Headteacher
Westgate Primary School
Summerhill Road
Dartford
DA1 2LP

Dear Mr Lloyd

Special measures monitoring inspection of Westgate Primary School

Following my visit with Joanna Jones, additional inspector, to your school on 16 and 17 July 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 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 December 2013. 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.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

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

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 Kent.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - making better use of time in lessons to enable pupils to complete work that challenges them and increases their knowledge, understanding and skills
 - making sure that lessons and activities are sufficiently challenging and engaging for pupils of all abilities
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve and the rate at which learning should proceed
 - improving marking so that teachers' comments make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work, and providing time for them to make improvements.

- Rapidly accelerate progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for boys, by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to write well and at length, and to apply and develop their mathematical skills in meaningful contexts in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - closing the gaps in achievement between pupils supported through the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs, and other pupils
 - ensuring that pupils in Key Stage 2 use phonics skills systematically to read difficult words.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - using assessment information about pupils' progress more accurately and quickly to identify gaps in pupils' learning and to ensure that teachers address these
 - increasing the accuracy of monitoring and evaluation of progress in those areas where pupils underperform most significantly, and hold subject and phase leaders more effectively to account for bringing about improvement
 - ensuring staff pay increases are linked to better performance
 - ensuring that governors hold the school robustly to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 July 2014

Evidence

The inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class. All visits to classrooms were carried out jointly with the executive headteacher or head of school. Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school (who is also the special educational needs co-ordinator), subject leaders for mathematics and English, a group of pupils, a group of teachers, three governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. The inspectors spoke informally to parents and carers attending an open evening and met with a group of parents invited by the school. The inspectors also attended an assembly, looked at pupils' workbooks and heard pupils read. The inspectors considered the governing body minutes, information about pupils' progress, and the school's records of checks made on the quality of teaching.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the executive headteacher's contract has been extended until December 2014. The deputy headteacher has been appointed as head of school for the same period. Governors continue to explore a move to academy status with another local school. The Year 2 and Year 5 class teachers will leave at the end of the summer term and replacements have been appointed to start in September. The Year 5 teacher is currently away from school and the class is being taught by a temporary teacher.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Children in the Reception class make good progress because teaching is good. By the end of the year, the great majority of those who started at a level below that typical for their age have caught up well to where they should be.

Standards in Key Stage 1 have improved to be in line with the national average in reading and writing. Achievement in mathematics has also improved but remains below the national average because more-able pupils do not do as well as they should. Progress across the key stage as a whole is reasonable, but pupils in Year 2 make slower progress than those in Year 1 due to less-effective teaching.

By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in mathematics and reading meet or exceed the national average. The majority of pupils make reasonable progress in writing, but more-able pupils do not reach the higher levels they should.

Pupils eligible for additional government funding make inconsistent progress in writing and mathematics. In reading, these pupils generally make progress at the same rate or faster than their peers, so the gaps are starting to close.

Pupils with special educational needs do as well or better than their peers in reading and writing. Their progress is less consistent in mathematics. and in some year groups, there are notable gaps to be addressed.

Boys generally make similar or better progress compared to girls in mathematics. Progress in writing is inconsistent so that boys do not do as well as girls in some year groups. In reading, boys often make less progress; as a result, their attainment in Years 2 to 5 is one to three terms behind that of girls.

The school is identifying pupils who are falling behind and is starting to take action to help them catch up by providing additional support. However, the adults working with these pupils are not all shown precisely what to do to raise standards. Consequently, this work is not fully effective. Senior leaders recognise the need to include more-able pupils in this support so they make the progress they should.

The teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is effective. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is very high. Older pupils use their phonics skills successfully to tackle unknown words.

Pupils' workbooks in English and mathematics show a good range of work. In other subjects, expectations for writing and mathematics are less demanding. An exception to this is the Year 6 Enterprise Project. Here, pupils surveyed staff about a menu, calculated costs, wrote letters, and finally created and served a staff lunch. They thoroughly enjoyed this purposeful task, which enabled them to apply their skills in real life.

The quality of teaching

Teachers across the school have established good routines. All teachers consistently tell pupils their task and the criteria for success. Where learning is more effective, teachers plan precisely what they want pupils to learn and demonstrate this to pupils so they know what to aim for. These teachers have high expectations. They set tasks according to pupils' earlier achievements so there is a good level of challenge; this helps them progress well. However, in other classes, teachers do not think carefully enough about pupils' starting points and exactly where they want them to end up. Work is often too easy and, therefore, pupils make less headway.

Adults sometimes question pupils well to check and deepen their understanding, which helps to move learning on. This good practice is not consistent and sometimes teachers accept pupils' answers too readily. They do not probe deeper or ask pupils to think hard and explain their answers, so they do not make as much progress as they should. Teachers do not always give teaching assistants enough direction to ensure they support pupils' learning effectively.

Teachers and pupils are getting to grips with the new target system. Pupils select targets to work on for each piece of work. Some teachers give pointers to help them

choose, for example showing pupils a group of targets from which to select. In other cases, pupils choose targets which are not appropriate for the task; these cannot be achieved. Pupils do not all understand the wording of some targets. Teachers say that this means some pupils choose easier targets, which holds them back. Leaders agree that more development is needed for the system to be fully effective in all classes. Nonetheless, pupils are positive and can point to improvements in their work. Teachers agree that the target system, although not yet embedded, is a helpful tool.

Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and conscientiously. They frequently make useful comments to help pupils progress and set new challenges for pupils to attempt. Where less effective, marking does not link closely enough to the task or targets; these unrelated suggestions to improve do not have the desired effect on pupils' learning.

Time is now usefully allocated each morning for pupils to respond to their teachers' comments in their books. This is helping pupils to improve their work. As one pupil remarked, 'We know what to do and how to do it.' Parents and carers appreciate the weekly opportunity offered for them to see their children's work, as well as the interim progress reports which advise how well their children are doing.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Throughout this monitoring inspection, pupils' conduct was impressively good. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, trying hard to do their best. They play co-operatively outside. The school's behaviour logs indicate there are a few incidents of poor behaviour, but pupils, and parents and carers, agree these are usually resolved well. However, records do not indicate whether further intervention is provided to support pupils whose names occur more frequently in the Reflection Book.

Attendance is in line with the national average. Parents and carers say their children are happy to come to school, and pupils agree lessons are fun. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher has continued to focus determinedly on driving the school forward, setting high expectations for the staff team. The right systems and procedures to improve teaching and learning are in place, such as marking and pupil targets. However, all leaders, including governors, agree that more remains to be done to ensure these systems are used consistently, embedded and sustainable. This will be especially important with staff changes in September.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics are slowly developing their role. Their action plans identify the right areas to improve, but further attention is required to show exactly what they hope to achieve. They support each other well, for example when making checks of pupils' books. However, such work is not documented in

enough detail to help them ensure their recommendations to teachers are followed up. Helpful training has given them increased confidence to develop good practice in other classes. They are ready to pick up the pace of their work to ensure they play their full part in school improvement.

Senior leaders hold teachers robustly to account for how well pupils are doing. The new performance policy ensures rigorous targets based on pupils' progress are fully linked to pay increases.

The newly reconstituted governing body has made a purposeful start. Statutory policies are now fully in place to underpin the school's work. Governors are helpfully linked to key aspects of the school's work. They have made useful initial visits to inform them about their area of focus. As a result, they are well placed to carry out visits more closely aligned to the school's action plan, to see for themselves how well the school is doing and challenge it further.

Governors are exploring a move to academy status. This process is still at an early stage as governors rightly seek the best options for Westgate. All leaders are aware they must ensure this does not distract them from continuing to improve the school.

External support

Following the judgement at the first monitoring inspection, the local authority has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose.

The local authority has provided or brokered a range of useful support, including coaching for subject leaders. Further helpful support is planned, including the induction and monitoring of new staff in September. School leaders make good use of links with other local schools to develop teaching and provide mutual challenge and support for school leaders.