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21 March 2016

Ms J Waine  
Headteacher  
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Plaistow  
London  
E13 0JW

Dear Ms Waine

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Portway Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 2–3 March 2016, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2015.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, I held discussions with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. I met with a group of pupils and talked to some parents at the end of the school day. The headteacher, the executive headteacher of Selwyn Primary School and other senior leaders took part in inspection activities. Inspectors considered documents related to the quality of teaching and safeguarding. They conducted a scrutiny of a range of pupils' books with senior leaders and considered information about outcomes for pupils presented by the school.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit a new leader for the early years has been appointed and two new deputy headteachers have taken up their posts. Six teachers have now left the school since the last inspection. Nine teaching posts, mainly in Key Stage 2 are currently being covered by temporary staff. Some of these teachers have begun their work in the school since the last monitoring visit. Governors have taken further steps to proceed with the process of becoming a Multi Academy Trust with Selwyn

Primary School. The executive headteacher and other leaders of that school have continued to offer Portway Primary School regular and extensive support.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school is taking effective action towards the removal of special measures

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs) before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2015**

- Improve the effectiveness of the leaders and managers at all levels by ensuring that:
  - performance information is understood and used to identify the actions that are needed to secure swift improvements
  - the quality of teaching is checked systematically, and teachers receive advice and guidance to help them improve their skills
  - there is consistency in leadership across year groups so that all staff are involved in setting priorities for improvement and understand their role in implementing agreed policies consistently
  - safeguarding procedures and documentation are kept fully up to date
  - governors continue to be active in monitoring the school and checking that agreed actions are effective in improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are going to achieve by setting ambitious targets for pupils' learning and progress
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information accurately to set tasks that build on pupils' skills and are demanding enough for the most able and not too difficult for others
  - making better use of time in lessons so pupils have enough time to complete the work
  - developing teachers' questioning skills so they probe pupils' understanding deeply and so enable them to learn well.
  
- Improve pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school by:
  - making sure that pupils develop basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics securely by the end of Year 2
  - ensuring that teachers' assessment of pupils' understanding are accurate
  - closing the gaps between pupils supported by the pupil premium and other pupils in school
  - ensuring that pupils correct and improve their work when it has been marked
  - closely checking pupils' progress during lessons and moving them on quickly to more demanding work as soon as they are ready.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 2–3 March 2016**

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Outcomes are improving most rapidly for the pupils in classes where teaching has remained stable and its quality has been able to develop. For example, inspection evidence, and your own information, shows that children in the Reception Year and Key Stage 1 pupils are making more rapid progress.

In other parts of the school, rates of progress and levels of attainment remain more variable. The improvements you have made to the frequency and quality of checks on outcomes mean that senior leaders are acting more effectively when the progress of pupils slows. However, the continuing changes in teaching staff have reduced the impact of the good work leaders have done to improve teaching. The recent appointments to your leadership team have added much needed capacity. The most recent information shows that they are having an immediate and positive impact on pupils' outcomes which now needs to be sustained.

Leaders have taken effective action to ensure that the recommendations from the review of pupil premium spending have led to improvements in outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The school's information indicates that these pupils are making good progress, given their starting points.

The ambitious expectations you have set for pupils' attainment are driving progress forward. Leaders now need to tackle the remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils' progress remains rapid enough to make up for previous underachievement.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

All teachers now provide pupils with consistent, regular guidance which follows the agreed teaching policies. Even teachers who have very recently started work at the school understand how to do this. Work for pupils across the whole curriculum is now set with clear objectives for learning in mind which pupils show they understand. As a result, leaders are able to check how well pupils are learning more readily and provide individual teachers with more precise guidance to help them improve their skills.

This development of teaching quality manifests itself most strikingly among staff who have been in post since the beginning of the school year. This development has remained sharply focused on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Better, sharper questioning and more thought-provoking activities are evident in classrooms. Teachers are providing a higher level of challenge for the most-able pupils. They are providing better guidance to pupils on how to use practical resources to support their learning. Time is being used better in lessons to enable pupils to improve their work. Most teachers give prompt advice to pupils

during lessons. However, they sometimes do not expect pupils to act on this promptly enough. Teachers apply the agreed policy on feedback consistently, and provide extensive advice for pupils to use. However, some teachers do not then insist that pupils' response to this is of the highest quality they are capable of.

Classrooms are replete with helpful, relevant displays and books are looked after well. Teachers maintain a high quality of presentation when writing in pupils' books. However, a very few pupils are upset because they are provided with damaged basic equipment. Some teachers have not picked up on the demotivating impact of this.

Teachers are effective in ensuring that pupils maintain positive attitudes to learning and, as a result, disruption in lessons is minimal. However, some teachers have to work very hard to keep pupils engaged, especially when less well-conceived activities fail to engage pupils or when pupils realise the pace and expectations in lessons relent.

Across the whole school, a sense of sensitive, unobtrusive but effective support for those pupils who are most at risk is evident. Pupils and teachers alike are strongly committed to the values and expectations which senior leaders have instilled. This helps maintain the necessary pace of improvement, though the lack of stability in staff has made this much more challenging to manage.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Positive attitudes are now the common currency across the school. Where weaker teaching is still evident, it is more apparent that these attitudes are still at a fragile stage of development.

Young children display impeccable manners in the dining hall and know how to moderate the register of their voice. Pupils are taught how to think about the needs and safety of one another well. They appreciate the growing sense of community in the school and, as one pupil described it, the 'homely feel'. Pupils say they feel safe and appreciate the skills of staff in picking up on any emerging disagreements between pupils quickly.

When pupils attempt activities which require more advanced collaborative skills they are too reliant on teachers to guide and support their learning.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection appeared to be sophisticated users of modern technologies. The work of the school to help them stay safe when using the internet is keeping pace with this.

Pupils say they feel listened to. However, the opportunities for pupils to voice and organise their views and opinions so that they can develop their understanding of rights and influence are still too limited.

The behaviour of pupils is orderly, calm and polite, both in and out of lessons. Pupils who have more difficulty managing their own behaviour receive effective support and guidance.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Senior leaders check on outcomes for pupils more regularly than at the time of the first monitoring visit. A clear six-step system allows leaders to see at a glance if pupils are on track to make the progress now expected of them. These expectations are suitably high. Senior leaders have managed the transition to a new system of assessment well. It is aligned well with that of the partner school so that information can be checked for accuracy more effectively. Pupil progress meetings make the assessment process comprehensible to teachers and hold them closely to account for the impact of their work. This rigorous scrutiny has exposed the remaining weaknesses in teaching more fully and enabled senior leaders to take further action to address this.

Leaders know well the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. They know what needs to be done to improve it still further. New senior leaders are adding much needed capacity to challenge and support teachers. The expanded senior team must now focus on helping the headteacher work with the partner school to develop an effective strategy for securing greater stability among the teaching staff. Effective training and support for more established teachers led to biggest improvements to outcomes. The new early years leader has wasted no time in addressing remaining weaknesses in provision and providing effective guidance to remaining staff. Senior leaders have the skills and have now created the climate necessary to enable them to offer suitable support when employing newly qualified teachers. However, they should consider very carefully how many they decide to employ in the first instance.

Governors have convened more frequently since the last monitoring visit. They consider evidence more fully and incisively. However, they would benefit from even more clarity about the whole range of information leaders use to evaluate pupils' progress. New governors have enriched the quality of expertise available to help them hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and are monitored well. However, leaders and governors know there is more work to be done to tighten up some procedures, such as those related to children at risk of going missing from education. Inspection evidence shows that checks on recruitment of staff meet requirements, although records show that the expected standard of employment references should be reviewed.

Leaders and governors could be doing more to check on the views of parents and pupils as they drive improvement further. This would help them continue to deepen the commitment of the wider community to the values and expectations they are creating.

## **External support**

The partnership with Selwyn Primary School has been instrumental in setting an appropriate pace of improvement and exemplifying the required standards of teaching. The executive headteacher has skilfully supported the development of senior leaders. She is well placed to help the headteacher to further develop the strategy needed to enable special measures to be removed.