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Mr Tim Richards
Executive Headteacher
Uplands Junior School
Melbourne Road
Highfields
Leicester
LE2 0DR

Dear Mr Richards

Special measures monitoring inspection of Uplands Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 13 May 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.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, two representatives of the local authority, the interim headteacher and two assistant headteachers. The executive headteacher and the interim headteacher accompanied Her Majesty's Inspector on a tour of the school which included a visit to every classroom. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

The substantive headteacher has been absent from school since September 2013. A temporary acting deputy headteacher was appointed by the school in August 2013. She became the temporary acting headteacher in September 2013. The local

authority brokered the additional support of an experienced headteacher to support the acting headteacher in this role for three days a week until the end of the autumn term 2013. The local authority has now brokered the support of an executive headteacher to work with the school until December 2014. He took up this post on 28 April 2014 and will be in school full time for at least the remainder of this term. The acting headteacher has now become the interim headteacher. The governing body was suspended in November 2013. An interim executive board took over the governance of the school in January 2014.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The school has experienced an extended period of staff turbulence, including at senior leadership level. This began prior to the most recent section 5 inspection and has continued to have a significant detrimental impact on the rate of school improvement.

The local authority set out a plan which identified suitable actions to support the school to address the issues identified at the last section 5 inspection. The plan does not fully match the more recently changed circumstances of the school.

The interim headteacher and two assistant headteachers, with the support of the local authority school improvement adviser and brokered external consultants, have been carrying out a range of monitoring and improvement activities since the last section 5 inspection. The quality of school improvement plans which have guided school leaders' work has not been good enough to drive improvements with sufficient urgency. The plans do not always identify clear and measurable targets, and points to check if improvements are on track for success. Leaders are collecting information but they are not presenting it in a way that gives a clear account of the impact their work is having. Leaders are analysing information about how well pupils are doing, but they are not sure that the assessment information they are using to track pupils' progress is accurate.

The recently appointed executive headteacher is developing and implementing new plans to ensure that there is an accurate view of the school's work and to drive improvement. He has proposed a new structure for staffing; staff spoken with report that he has won their confidence.

The local authority has helped to establish a partnership with another local school so that teachers can see practice which is effective elsewhere. Leaders report that this has raised teachers' expectations and their confidence. External consultants have supported leaders to be better able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and to support teachers to improve. Leaders have collected evidence which

confirms that some teachers have improved the way they teach writing and are asking pupils questions more often to check on their understanding and to challenge them to work harder. Leaders do not have evidence to confirm that these improvements have been sustained and are improving the rate of pupils' progress over time. The feedback given to teachers is not always clear enough to help them to improve. Leaders report that, in some cases, teachers have been slow to implement the necessary improvements agreed.

A whole-school approach introduced to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality has achieved good results. Leaders have improved the way they communicate with parents and carers so that they are better informed and increasingly involved in school life.

The interim executive board is made up of a small group of experienced and committed governors who recognise the need to act with urgency to drive the necessary improvements. They have not established a leadership structure for the school or systems to check on its work first hand, or to hold school leaders to account for the effectiveness of their work.

School leaders and members of the interim executive board, have not checked well enough on the effectiveness of the implementation of safeguarding arrangements to be confident that there is safe recruitment and that all pupils are safe. They have not checked well enough that staff have the necessary training and skills they need to carry out their roles and responsibilities in this regard.

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.

The interim executive board must carry out a full and urgent review of safeguarding policies and procedures.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey
Her Majesty's Inspector