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23 September 2010

Mr Adams
Lings Primary School
Hayeswood Road
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Dear Mr Adams

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lings Primary School

Following my visit with Andrew Lyons, Additional Inspector, to your school on Tuesday 21 September 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2010. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Close the gap between attainment in English, mathematics and science at Lings Primary School with the national averages by:
 - making sure all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make consistently good or better progress in all lessons to eradicate underachievement
 - increasing the amount of good teaching and ensuring a clear focus on raising expectations and matching the level of work to the abilities of all pupils
 - improving the pace of learning and the active participation by pupils in lessons.

- Develop leadership expertise across the school and ensure all contribute to school improvement by:
 - improving the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - establishing effective monitoring and evaluation practices by all those with leadership and management responsibilities, including the governing body
 - strengthening the governing body so that it is at full complement and has the capacity to fulfil its responsibilities.

- Ensure all safeguarding requirements are fulfilled by:
 - completing relevant risk assessments for internal school activities
 - improving relationships between the facilities management company and the leaders of the school so that systems and practice can be agreed
 - ensure formal records are kept for incidents of racist behaviour.

- Improve attendance to at least average levels with a focus on supporting the few families who persistently do not send their children to school.

Special measures: monitoring of Lings Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on Tuesday 21 September 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other school leaders, teachers, administration staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority, talked to pupils and looked at their work.

Context

In September 2010, a new interim headteacher was appointed to the school. Five governors have been appointed leaving one vacancy to be filled.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Analysis of Key Stage 2 performance data confirms that attainment has continued to fall to low levels in English, mathematics and science despite efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. The previous underachievement remains for both different classes and groups of pupils across the school because progress is still too variable. Lesson observations confirmed that most lessons are satisfactory, with some good teaching in Year 5. Some inadequate teaching remains in Key Stage 2 when the pace of lessons is too slow and tasks lack sufficient challenge. Consequently, underachievement has yet to be effectively addressed in all classes. However, pupils in Year 5 are making good progress as a direct result of teachers planning challenging work and setting realistic targets for each learner. Most literacy and numeracy lessons observed included activities for partner and small-group work to involve pupils more in their learning. Boys in particular are responding well to this with many demonstrating an enthusiasm for writing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons because of carefully targeted support. The progress of more-able pupils is often unsatisfactory because tasks are either too easy or not carefully matched to the key learning intention of the lesson.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Close the gap between attainment in English, mathematics and science at Lings Primary School with the national averages – inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Relationships between pupils and staff and among pupils are positive. Pupils are responding well to the efforts of teachers to plan interesting lessons and learning activities for them. Well-led assemblies under themes such as 'building blocks'

develop a sense of teamwork and ownership among the pupils and staff. Inspectors noted that pupils demonstrated an enthusiasm for learning in many classes and this was especially so when activities provided opportunities for them to work alongside classmates. However, the pupils became inattentive when the teachers talked too much and relied heavily on the question and answer technique to engage them.

All staff work hard to encourage pupils to attend school. Procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance and tackling persistent absence have been overhauled. Routines are clearly understood and implemented fully by all staff. School leaders and administrative staff meet the education welfare officer on a weekly basis to monitor the attendance of persistent absentees and initiate any action needed. This includes immediate contact with parents and carers about any unexplained absence and home visits by the headteacher. As a result, pupil attendance is now at average levels and the number of persistent absentees has reduced by two-thirds.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Improve attendance to at least average levels with a focus on supporting the few families who persistently do not send their children to school – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is still too variable to ensure all pupils make good progress. Teachers are working hard to improve the quality of their lessons. For instance, there is now greater consistency in the planning format for literacy and numeracy lessons because of regular monitoring by the interim headteacher and subject leaders. Teachers now evaluate their plans on a daily basis and make modifications based on ongoing assessment of what the pupils know, understand and can do. Future activities are then planned to meet the pupils' needs for the next series of lessons. This technique is effective for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for others who also need extra support. Unfortunately, this is not always the case for more-able pupils, when they are asked to work below the expected levels for their age group or given tasks that they have done before. This lack of challenge leads to unsatisfactory progress for these pupils and loss of concentration in lessons.

All teachers share the learning intentions of the lesson with the pupils in their class. Most teachers strive to inject a sense of pace into their lessons using strategies that are designed to engage and motivate the pupils. However, these strategies are not always appropriately matched to the desired learning for that lesson. The means of judging the success of the learning are occasionally too complicated. As a result, the learning intentions become obscured and pupils are not given sufficient time to complete tasks and secure good levels of achievement.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- increasing the amount of good teaching – inadequate

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new interim leader is successfully building on the work undertaken by the previous, provisional headteacher. A sense of purpose exists among the staff and morale is positive. Subject leaders and those with responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage now play a more prominent role, with the support of local authority staff, in tackling deficiencies in the curriculum. Several monitoring procedures have been introduced. Subject leaders regularly monitor teachers' planning and pupils' work but have yet to observe teaching and learning in the classrooms. The interim headteacher undertakes regular observations of teaching and learning in lessons. The strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers have been correctly identified and are consistent with those of inspectors. However, this monitoring is yet to have a significant impact on pupils' learning and achievements.

Discussions with staff and parents confirm that a positive climate for learning is developing well. Furthermore, pupils are keen to be in school and this is mirrored in better attendance. Robust procedures for safeguarding, risk assessment and the formal recording of any racist incidents are now in place. Agreed procedures now exist between school leaders and the facilities management company over site maintenance and risk assessment. Governance is strengthening because several new governors have been appointed leaving only one vacancy. Individual governors are now linked to areas of the curriculum and some have already had meetings with subject leaders to develop a greater understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A clear schedule for monitoring the school has been implemented and visits undertaken.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Develop leadership expertise across the school and ensure all contribute to school improvement – satisfactory
- Ensure all safeguarding requirements are fulfilled by – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has provided good levels of support to the school. The local authority statement of action meets requirements. The school has benefited from good quality training and support from the local authority, which have quickly led to some improvements in provision including the strengthening of leadership and the day-to-day management of the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to accelerate progress and raise standards in English, mathematics and science.

- Use assessment information more effectively to pitch work accurately at the correct level for all pupils.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders further in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning to facilitate pupil achievement and improvements in provision.