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1 July 2011

Mr Simon Adams
Interim Headteacher
Lings Primary School
Hayeswood Road
Lings
Northampton
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Dear Mr Adams

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lings Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 29 June 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2010. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures –**good**

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **good**

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 the Governing Body 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.

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

- 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.

Special measures: monitoring of Lings Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 29–30 June 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, staff with leadership responsibilities, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

A new teacher was appointed for the Early Years Foundation Stage class for the summer term. Furthermore, a substantive headteacher has been appointed to start at the beginning of the next academic year.

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

Analysis of the school's comprehensive range of performance data, discussions with senior staff and observations in lessons confirm that pupils' achievement continues to improve. A review of teacher assessments at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2 for 2010/11 indicates a clear trend of improvement. Variations in progress between different groups are being successfully eliminated with standards now close to national averages at end of both key stages. However, the proportions of those pupils attaining the higher Levels 3 and 5 in Key Stages 1 and 2 respectively are below national averages.

Achievement in writing continues to improve. Many pupils in both key stages make good use of their growing vocabulary to write increasingly more interesting and descriptive text. For example, after being inspired by listening to an extract from the *Hobbit*, a pupil in Year 4 wrote, 'He scrambled up the dangerous jagged rocks and held his breath against the revolting stench of sulphur.' In Year 5, another pupil captured the moment with words such as, 'Earthquake victim, sitting alone, with no food and with no home. Fearful and frustrated, more and more devastated.' when writing a poem about the earthquake in Japan. However, scrutiny of pupils' work in Year 3 confirms that, due to previously weak teaching, a legacy of underachievement still remains.

A significant trend of improvement is now evident in mathematics where pupils in all year groups are working at nationally expected levels. Pupils respond well to a wide range of opportunities to develop their numeracy skills. They take a pride in their work and calculations are presented neatly within their books. Older pupils relish the opportunity to solve mathematical problems with a partner or in small groups. For instance, pupils in Year 6 worked cooperatively in small groups to effectively identify mathematical strategies to solve a pentomino puzzle.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making good progress in all areas of learning in response to significant improvements in provision. A review of data indicates that the attainment of these children is now at broadly expected levels for those of similar age.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils respond very well to the positive climate for learning that has been established this year. They find learning fun and enjoy coming to school because of the interesting learning activities planned effectively for them, such as the science week held in the previous term. Relationships between pupils and staff and pupils themselves are very positive. The behaviour of pupils in the vast majority of lessons is good or better. However, pupils can still be a little restless or inattentive when teachers take too long to explain a new concept.

Attitudes towards learning have continued to develop well and are now very positive throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate greater levels of confidence in communicating ideas because of their improving vocabulary and well-planned opportunities for speaking and listening. They respond well to the planned activities for them to work with a partner or in small groups. All pupils demonstrate a desire to improve and this is reflected in their written responses to the detailed comments made by teachers in their books for English and mathematics.

The issues related to poor attendance have been eliminated. A analysis of the latest data for this academic year confirms that attendance, at 96%, is now above the national average. The number of persistent absentees continues to fall.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

The effectiveness of provision

The proportion of teaching and learning that is good or better continues to increase. Improvements noted at the time of the last visit have been sustained and continue to be extended throughout the school. No inadequate teaching was observed. However, some weaker teaching still remains for pupils in Year 3 and in some foundation subjects in other years where sometimes teachers spend too much time explaining new concepts to pupils. As a result they make only satisfactory progress.

The quality of planning for lessons in English, mathematics and science is consistently good across the school as a result of regular monitoring by senior leaders and the subject coordinators. Teachers continue to use information and communication well to illustrate key teaching points and engage pupils in their learning and assessment activities. The needs of all pupils, and especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are catered for well through the careful matching of tasks to ability. Caring support staff provide effective guidance to those pupils with a specific need. Good levels of challenge are provided for more able pupils in many lessons.

The assessment of pupils' progress continues to improve. The quality of marking in English and mathematics has improved dramatically and is now consistently good across the school. It is very detailed, fully engages pupils in the review of their progress and informs them about what they need to do next to improve their work.

The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is good. Assessment is a growing strength. The progress of each individual child is now monitored very closely through the gathering of detailed observations in all areas of learning.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to accelerate progress and raise standards in English, mathematics and science – **good**
- Use assessment information more effectively to pitch work accurately at the correct level for all pupils – **good**

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher continues to provide clear direction for the school's drive for improvement. Teamwork is now a strong feature amongst members of the senior leadership team, who are tireless in their determination to raise standards. A trend of improvement in pupils' writing and mathematics is now firmly established. A strong sense of accountability and shared ambition is maintaining the pace of improvement. Senior leaders and those with subject responsibility play an increasingly more effective role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning within the school. They provide good levels of support to other colleagues through paired teaching and the weekly monitoring of lesson planning. The drive to improve the quality of marking has had a very positive impact on pupils' outcomes. A legacy of distributed leadership now exists amongst senior leaders to support further improvement under the leadership from next term of the newly appointed headteacher.

School governance continues to improve. A full complement of governors monitor the school's work through regular visits and meetings with senior staff. These are formally recorded to support self-evaluation. As a result, the governing body is now more able to hold the school to account because governors have a better

understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and now ask challenging questions of school leaders. The partnership between the school and parents and carers continues to grow. Discussions with parents and carers confirm that they are pleased with the overall levels of improvement.

The school has maintained the improvements in its procedures for safeguarding noted in the report on the last monitoring inspection.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Develop leadership expertise across the school and ensure all contribute to school improvement – **good**
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning to facilitate pupil achievement and improvements in provision – **good**

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school. Good progress is being made on the priorities within the action plan for improvement. Governors continue to benefit from good quality training and support from local authority advisers.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the school in all classes and in all areas of the curriculum.