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8 December 2011

Mr L Wolmarans
Headteacher
Lings Primary School
Hayeswood Road
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Dear Mr Wolmarans

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Lings Primary School

Following my visit with Sue Hall, additional inspector, to your school on 6 December 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 10 March. 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.

Special measures: monitoring of Lings Primary School

Report from fourth monitoring inspection on 6–7 December 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body, other members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

A new permanent headteacher and two teachers were appointed for the start of this term.

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

Analysis of validated data for 2011 confirms a steady trend of improvement at the end of Key Stage 1 to broadly average levels. However, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in these 2011 national tests is well below average in English and mathematics. This is much lower than the predicted teacher assessments for this year group. School leaders have since undertaken a thorough analysis of these results to identify patterns in underperformance and weaknesses in teacher assessment. New objective data has been gathered for the current Year 6 pupils and other year groups in this key stage to provide a detailed baseline from which to both measure and track the individual achievement of all pupils.

Review of this new data during the inspection and pupils' work confirm a rising trend of performance in English by pupils now in Year 6. This is because of previously good or better teaching for these pupils in Year 5. Scrutiny of the pupils' books confirms that more than 20% of Year 6 pupils are working at higher levels in writing and mathematics. Sentences by a boy in Year 6 such as, 'The fire has made a ruin of our beloved town. It has forced many families to leave homes, and stay in the cold, wet streets.' epitomise the quality of the pupils developing use of vocabulary. However, inaccuracies in spelling and punctuation still remain and this limits the ability of all pupils to achieve well in writing. Furthermore, the insufficient opportunity for them to write at length in other subjects is limiting their ability to develop their literacy skills at even greater pace.

Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 is good as a result of good provision and effective leadership of these key stages. Standards of reading and early literacy skills are improving because of effective phonics teaching. Good learning was observed across Key Stage 2 in a number of classes and pupil groupings during the inspection. However, improvements still need to be

consolidated throughout the school to ensure that a sustained trend of improving outcomes is consolidated and firmly embedded for the future.

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

The vast majority of pupils respond very well to the positive climate for learning. Many pupils state that they find learning exciting and love coming to school because of the extra range of activities that are available for them such as the newly implemented clubs to develop their sporting and artistic skills. Incidents of poor behaviour are diminishing because of the rapidly improving positive climate for learning and trust that is being built within the school.

Attitudes towards learning continue to develop very positively in the vast majority of classes. This is especially so when the quality of teaching is good or better. Pupils demonstrate greater levels of confidence in communicating ideas because of their improving vocabulary and the many opportunities they have to practise their speaking and listening. The vast majority of pupils demonstrate good personal and social skills when working with a partner or in small groups. The quality of presentation in their books is inconsistent, reflecting past low expectations and the absence of a neat cursive handwriting style. Pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 value the opportunity of entering into a private dialogue about their work with their teacher through detailed and sensitive marking that highlights what they need to do next to improve.

Poor attendance is virtually eliminated and the reasons for good attendance are fully understood by pupils, parents and carers. Analysis of the latest data for this academic year confirms that attendance is above average and 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

Quality of teaching and learning across the school is now predominantly good or better in nearly all classes as a result of effective in-house training and support.

However, there are still isolated pockets of inadequate or mundane teaching and learning at the start of Key Stage 2. This is often because pupils have to listen passively to the teacher for far too long rather than being engaged in worthwhile learning activities in small groups or working on their tasks. This inadequate teaching and learning restricts the school's ability to build on the good achievement of pupils in Year 2.

There are many key strengths evident in over two thirds of other lessons where teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. These include:

- detailed lesson planning that identify clear learning intentions and criteria to measure pupil achievement
- a strong focus on engaging pupils in their learning through dialogue, paired work and problem solving in groups
- good use of information and communication technology to support teaching and engage pupils in their learning
- good behaviour management built on tolerance and respect
- some very good use of resources, drama and role play to make learning exciting and fun for pupils.

There are still some weaknesses in how teachers use of assessments to both monitor and measure pupil achievement. For example, inconsistencies in the quality of marking by some teachers leads to inaccuracies in writing not being effectively picked up, holding back the pace of progress of some pupils. Furthermore, previous weaknesses in teacher assessment led to some overgenerous judgements about pupils past achievements in Key Stage 2 during the last academic year. Remedial action by the new headteacher to address this weakness has been quick.

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 – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The newly appointed headteacher continues to build on the foundations of improvement laid by previous school leadership. His clear vision and drive to improve pupil outcomes is setting the standard for further improvement. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leadership is regular and robust. Inadequate and mundane teaching is being tackled with rigour based on a thorough understanding of what constitutes high-quality learning. The many improvements made in the range of learning experiences now available to pupils demonstrates that school

leadership has the skill and determination to take the school forwards and address remaining weaknesses in teaching and learning.

The governing body is becoming increasingly more effective and its monitoring of the school's work is now satisfactory. Visits into classrooms with a specific focus are used to support tighter monitoring of the school's work. As a result, governors are more confident in asking challenging questions of school leadership based on a growing understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They fully recognise that the improvements made need to be firmly embedded to ensure these improvements are fully reflected in better outcomes for pupils. Much has been achieved in a very short time by the new headteacher. Parents and carers state that the school is rapidly improving but recognise that there is still more to do.

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 provides satisfactory levels of support within the context of diminishing resources.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that inadequate and mundane teaching is eradicated.