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Mrs D Hannaford
Headteacher
Millfield Primary School
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Dear Mrs Hannaford

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Millfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11–12 July 2012, 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 February 2011. 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers (NQT): the school may appoint an NQT into Reception, one NQT into Key Stage 1 and one into Year 5. Further NQTs may be appointed after discussion with HMI.

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 Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

Alan Alder
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2011

- Raise attainment, particularly for the most able pupils in English and mathematics across Years 1 to 6, by:
 - providing more opportunities for extended writing, especially in Key Stage 1
 - using demonstrations to show pupils how to organise their text into paragraphs that use a range of sentence structures and punctuation marks
 - giving pupils opportunities to apply their mathematical skills by doing more problem solving and investigative work.

- Ensure that the large majority of teaching is good or better by:
 - matching provision closely to the individual needs of pupils
 - ensuring introductions are brisk and actively involve pupils in their learning
 - improving the use of pupils' targets in lessons to make learning more tailored to individuals
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to assess their own work.

- Strengthen the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that weaknesses are tackled robustly and staff have clear direction to enable them to play their full part in improving the quality of provision.

- Improve attendance through:
 - analysing attendance data more rigorously in order to target actions effectively
 - working even more closely with families whose children do not attend on a regular enough basis.

Special measures: monitoring of Millfield Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 11–12 July 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the teachers responsible for literacy and numeracy, groups of pupils, and a representative from the local authority; he also spoke with the Chair of the Governing Body, by telephone.

Context

The school's roll is increasing.

At the end of this term, two temporary teachers are leaving, as are four substantive members of the teaching staff. In addition, one full-time teacher is becoming part-time. From September, six new teachers have been appointed. This means that the school's reliance on temporary staff will be much reduced, with just one temporary teacher remaining.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' attainment and progress are continuing to improve. The provisional results of the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 show that, in English, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected Level 4 has improved compared with the previous year and exceeds last year's national average. In mathematics, the improvement has been outstanding, from a very low baseline, and the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 now also exceeds last year's national average. The proportion of pupils reaching the more demanding Level 5 shows a small increase in English and a slight fall in mathematics. Given pupils' starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 2, the results show good progress. The proportion of pupils who have made the nationally expected progress has improved in both English and in mathematics, and expected progress is in line with the national figures for 2011. In the assessments taken at the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected Level 2 improved somewhat in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching the more demanding Level 3 has increased in reading and writing, in mathematics it is in line with the previous year.

The school's own assessments are generally accurate. These, as well as a scrutiny of pupils' work, show that improvements to pupils' attainment have taken place throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Greater than average progress is now being made in the majority of classes in reading, writing and mathematics. The group that most often makes the best progress is of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Those who generally make the least progress are disabled pupils and

those who have special educational needs. The standards being reached in most classes is in line with national averages, though boys' reading, writing and mathematics is below that of girls, especially in Years 3 and 4.

Pupils' work shows that their handwriting is improving well. The positioning and formation of letters is much more accurate and consistent. Although joined writing is not yet common enough, it is used much more than it was. Pupils' writing shows improvement too, with increasingly well-chosen adjectives and adverbs and more accurate spelling. Sentences are better constructed. Punctuation and grammar are improving, though younger pupils are inconsistent in the separation of their writing into sentences. The biggest improvement is made by the higher attaining pupils.

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

- raise attainment, particularly for the most able pupils in English and mathematics across Years 1 to 6 – good.

The quality of teaching

Eleven lessons were observed, of which four were good and seven were satisfactory. For the first time, no inadequate lessons were observed. The use of questions is much improved in some classrooms, requiring pupils to think carefully and helping to promote understanding. In a good mathematics lesson, the questions asked meant that pupils had to speak at length, to explain some quite difficult ideas. In most lessons, pupils are clear about what they need to learn because they are provided with a helpful short checklist. This is also used well in many lessons to enable pupils to assess their own progress. However, in a small minority of lessons, the learning is reduced because the objectives are not well enough communicated, or the activities in which pupils are engaged are not sufficiently relevant to the objectives. In one class, a group of pupils were engaged in free writing but were not clear about its purpose and were not reminded to apply to the task what they knew about the characteristics of good writing.

There are some good examples of teachers setting more challenging work for those pupils who can cope with it. A good example was observed in a Year 1 class in which some pupils produced some complex sentences as a result. However, in some sessions, such as short mental mathematics practice, there is no additional challenge provided for those who are already adept at the work being done. Nevertheless, the teaching of mathematics has improved and pupils are now more familiar with a range of mathematical processes.

The quality of marking remains variable. At its best, it provides clear, precise feedback and advice that focuses on one or two issues. However, some marking is not well focussed and does not provide such clear advice.

Pupils' phonic awareness is improving, though there is still some inaccuracy in the pronunciation of some letter sounds.

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

- ensure that the majority of teaching is good or better – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to report that behaviour is usually good and that they feel safe in lessons. They say that if there is bullying, it is dealt with effectively when they report it and that the school has improved in this respect. In lessons, pupils behave sensibly and are rarely off task. No disruption to lessons was observed. While pupils enjoy their work, their curiosity does not lead them to ask questions of their teachers.

There is thorough monitoring of pupils' attendance daily and this is accompanied by admirably persistent and timely contacts with parents, where this is needed. In addition, there is good acknowledgment by the school of pupils and classes with very high attendance. As a result, pupils' attendance continues to improve. The weakest attenders are pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The attendance of both groups is improving, particularly the latter. Girls' attendance has improved rapidly and is now clearly higher than that of boys. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing well.

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

- improve attendance – satisfactory.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

There is a strong and clear focus by the headteacher and the other leaders in the school to improve teaching and learning, and to raise pupils' attainment. This has led to some important improvements. Although there remain some inconsistencies, the characteristics of good teaching are more evident in lessons than previously. The leaders responsible for literacy and numeracy are carrying out their roles with greater assurance and expertise. They monitor pupils' progress well. There has been some exemplary analysis of pupils' learning in order to identify what steps need to be taken to improve the weaker areas. This has been used to good effect, for example in the interventions undertaken to boost pupils' learning.

The curriculum has been adapted well to enable pupils to improve the areas where their skills are weaker. For example, there are regular, and effective, sessions aimed at improving handwriting, spelling, reading and mental mathematics. Though this

has had the effect of narrowing the curriculum, it has given pupils a much better grasp of the basics.

The governing body is increasingly holding the school to account. It is now having a clear impact and is increasing in confidence.

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

- strengthen the monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that weaknesses are tackled robustly and staff have clear direction to enable them to play their full part in improving the quality of provision – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide valued support on a range of issues and to monitor regularly the progress being made by the school.