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24 June 2013

Mrs Cal Hurst  
Interim Headteacher  
Woolden Hill Primary School  
Netherfield Road  
Anstey  
Leicester  
LE7 7ES

Dear Mrs Hurst

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Woolden Hill Primary School**

Following my visit with Christine Bray, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 June 2013, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2012. 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Leicestershire.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2012

- Improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of all pupils in English and mathematics by making sure that teachers:
  - make better use of assessment information to plan lessons that meet the needs and abilities of all pupils so that they are more engaged in their learning
  - check progress closely to make sure that the pupils have work that is demanding enough
  - mark pupils' work regularly to show them more clearly how they can improve
  - expect more of pupils
  - provide more opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills when learning in other subjects, especially by providing tasks where pupils can write at length.
  
- Improve the capacity of leaders and managers to sustain improvement by:
  - linking the quality of teaching seen in lessons with pupils' progress and actual results
  - working closely alongside teachers to improve what they do by sharing good practice and coaching them
  - developing improvement plans that have a sharper focus on raising standards in writing and mathematics, including setting more demanding targets for improvement
  - developing more thorough systems to check the school's work.
  
- Improve the effectiveness and impact of governors by:
  - making sure that the governing body becomes more active and asks searching questions about the quality of teaching and how well different groups of pupils are doing
  - providing more training for governors so that they develop their understanding of the school's data and can easily identify when pupils are underachieving.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 June 2013**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the leaders of English and mathematics, pupils, the Vice Chair of the temporary Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. They held informal discussions with parents.

### **Context**

Following the November 2012 inspection, the local authority exercised its statutory powers to seek permission from the Secretary of State to convert the school to an academy. The original academy sponsor has since withdrawn and a replacement has yet to be found. The school has been going through an extended de-federation process which was completed on 18 June 2013. As a result, a new temporary governing body has been put in place. This will hold its first meeting on 27 June 2013.

Since the first monitoring inspection, on 7 February 2013, two class teachers have resigned. They left the school at Easter. There are currently two temporary teachers covering posts in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 4. The current deputy headteacher, who is also the Year 3 teacher, the Year 1 class teacher, who is also the leader for English, and an established nursery nurse in the Early Years Foundation Stage class have also resigned. They will leave the school at the end of the summer term. Two class teachers have been appointed for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 4 classes. They will take up their posts in September 2013. Appointments for Year 1 and Year 3 have yet to be made. The substantive headteacher has resigned and was seconded to another school when the de-federation process ended. The local authority has brokered the support of an interim headteacher, who is a Local Leader of Education, from another school. She took up her post in the school on 10 June 2013, having provided leadership support to the substantive headteacher since May 2013. She is currently in school for two days each week. This arrangement will continue until the end of the summer term. In September 2013, she will return to her own school when the local authority will put in place a new temporary headteacher but with an undertaking that the current interim headteacher will continue to provide support to the school as required.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Although standards have improved in reading, writing and mathematics in some year groups, they remain low for too many pupils. Observations in lessons, the school's own data and the analysis of the work in pupils' books confirm that progress has accelerated in some, but not all, year groups.

Improvements are the most marked in Key Stage 1, where teachers consistently make good use of assessment to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils. The previous downward trend in pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 1 has been arrested and reversed. The most recent teacher assessments confirm that pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is once again broadly in line with that found nationally. Because of improved teaching, pupils have a more secure understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics). The outcomes of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have significantly improved this year. Those pupils who had gaps in their understanding at the end of Year 1 last year have caught up and closed these gaps securely in Year 2. Pupils in these year groups get more opportunities to apply these skills so they are able to read and write more unfamiliar words independently.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, the progress that pupils make and the standards they reach are inconsistent because the quality of teaching varies between inadequate and good and much remains which requires improvement. Therefore, although progress is beginning to improve in some classes, it is not good enough to close the gaps in learning for all groups of pupils. Pupils do well where teaching is stronger and there are more opportunities to use their number skills to solve problems and to write at length and creatively. They are better able to identify their mistakes and make improvements. However, this is too often not the case. Expectations for the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation are still not high enough, and pupils do not always take pride in their work.

In all subjects, the work given to the more-able pupils in lessons is often too easy. As a result, these pupils do not make the progress they could, so they rarely exceed the levels expected for their age. Where teaching has improved and interventions are more appropriately focused, disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils who are supported by the additional pupil premium funding make similar progress to others.

### **The quality of teaching**

There have been some improvements to the quality of teaching. These improvements are most evident in the lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work carried out in the classes of teachers permanently employed by the school. These teachers have more consistently implemented the advice they have been given. However, teaching is not consistently strong enough to raise the attainment of all pupils.

In Key Stage 1, pupils were observed to make good progress in all subjects because teachers plan engaging lessons that challenge pupils of all abilities to do well. They use incisive questions to check and extend pupils' understanding. They modify their

plans on the spot if necessary. The additional adults in these lessons are well prepared and contribute significantly to pupils' learning, rather than just making sure that tasks are completed. These features were sometimes seen in other areas of the school, but not often enough to close the gaps in pupils' learning quickly enough.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2, the picture is variable. Some good teaching was seen but too much remains which requires improvement or which is inadequate. Features of the weaker lessons seen include:

- assessments not being used well enough to plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils of different abilities
- low expectations of what pupils can achieve
- activities that are not interesting enough to engage or motivate pupils
- teachers talking for too long and pupils not developing the skills they need to be able to learn independently or being able to share and talk about their own work
- additional adults not developed, prepared or deployed well enough
- teachers not making it clear enough to pupils what they need to do to be successful
- teachers and other adults concentrating on one group and not checking that other pupils in the class are learning
- adults providing poor models for pupils' speaking and writing skills
- weak subject knowledge
- adults being too ready to accept and praise pupils' for their first and often simplistic answers to questions.

The agreed approach to providing written feedback to pupils about their work has been strengthened. Ideas for what pupils can do to improve are mostly identified. However, pupils are rarely given the opportunity to respond to these suggestions so that they learn from their mistakes. Marking is not always up to date or linked to the objective for the lesson. Low expectations for handwriting and presentation remain. Not all teachers are giving pupils sufficient opportunities to write at length.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The new behaviour policy recently introduced to encourage good behaviour is working well where it is applied consistently by teachers and other adults. Most pupils behave well around school and are friendly and polite. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is directly linked to the quality of teaching. When activities do not inspire or challenge pupils, they lose motivation and concentration, their attitudes to learning suffer and their progress slows. They are not given enough opportunities to securely develop the skills they need to work independently or to collaborate with others. Pupils say that incidences of poor behaviour and rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively by the school. Attendance remains broadly in line with the national average.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Since the inspection in November 2012, the local authority, a National Leader in Education, a Local Leader in Education and other external consultants have provided useful support and advice to the school. This advice has not always been taken on board or acted upon swiftly by school leaders. Consequently, senior leaders and the governing body have not made enough of a difference to pupils' progress or to the quality of teaching and learning. For too long, they have allowed themselves to be distracted by the de-federation and academisation process rather than ensuring that all pupils achieve well. Staff report that communication from leaders has not been helpful, low staff morale has not been addressed successfully and, as a result, there is high staff turnover. Parents spoken to echoed the concerns about communication. Staff say that, until recently, improvement actions have not been communicated clearly enough. They have not been given clear guidance and direction so that they have been confused about what to do for the best. They also say that systems for managing their performance have not been rigorous enough. The remaining substantive members of the teaching staff report that they are keen to do all that they can to ensure that all pupils do as well as they should. Staff turnover has provided an additional challenge to ensuring continuity and improvement in the quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2. Work has been planned in partnership with the local authority Early Learning and Childcare team in order to urgently address the decline in the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

A new system for checking on the progress pupils make has been introduced which now accurately reflects the assessments of their performance. It is too early to evaluate its wider impact. The National Leader in Education has provided suitable support to teachers to improve their use of assessment, and written and spoken feedback to pupils. Visits for teachers to see outstanding practice elsewhere have been arranged. She has supported leaders to develop a more effective way of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. However, leaders have lacked a cohesive approach to staff development and to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's work. It has been impossible to check whether improvements have happened quickly enough or to find out if any additional support and development are required. It has taken too long to develop school improvement plans with a sharp focus on raising standards in writing and mathematics, including setting more demanding targets for improvement. The whole-school improvement plan has recently been improved by the interim headteacher for the most critical actions. She is aware that it requires further work in order to be fully fit for purpose. She has also put plans in place to make sure that the new tracking system is used effectively to improve the learning environment, to improve teaching and learning and to strengthen monitoring and evaluation activities. Her observations of the quality of teaching were confirmed as accurate

during the monitoring visit. She has a clear understanding of the urgent actions which need to be taken.

Some governors have begun to act on recent training and advice. They have been in to school to check on its work first hand and started to ask leaders more challenging questions in order to hold them to account. However, arrangements have changed. There is now a new temporary governing body which had not met at the time of the monitoring visit. Its members are aware of the need to act with urgency and build on the early actions of their predecessors in order to ensure that pupils achieve well.

### **External support**

The local authority's revised statement of action is now fit for purpose. Details of the support that the local authority, the Local Leader in Education and other agencies will provide have yet to be fully incorporated into the school's improvement plan.

The local authority has recently carried out a useful review of the school's effectiveness, including the quality of teaching, learning and leadership. The recommended actions for improvement are appropriate.

The local authority has taken decisive action to strengthen leadership wherever possible. Nevertheless, the impact of their actions, including those of the National Leader in Education and the Local Leader in Education have been limited, in part by events surrounding the determination of the future of the school and largely by the failure of school leaders to focus on carrying out improvement work with urgency. However, the local authority plan prioritises the correct actions needed to be taken to help pupils make faster progress, to improve the quality of teaching and to strengthen leadership and management, including governance, whilst the future of the school is being determined.