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Rose Payne
Interim Headteacher
Woolden Hill Primary School
Netherfield Road
Anstey
Leicester
LE7 7ES

Dear Mrs Payne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Woolden Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9 October 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 third 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.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 third monitoring inspection on 9 October 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, the leaders of English and mathematics, representatives of the governing body and representatives of the local authority. Informal discussions were held with parents and with pupils.

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 withdrew but, since the second monitoring inspection on 24 June 2013, a replacement has been found and the process of conversion to academy status has begun again. A temporary governing body remains in place but a new Chair of the Governing Body and other new members have been appointed.

Since the second monitoring inspection, there have been further significant changes to the context of the school. A new interim headteacher has been appointed by the local authority. She took up her full-time post on 28 August 2013 and it is intended that she will remain in post for two terms or until the school becomes an academy. The support from the previous interim headteacher, who is a Local Leader of Education from another school, will continue for the foreseeable future at the equivalent of one day a week. The deputy headteacher, who was also the Year 3 class teacher, left the school at the end of the summer term, as did the Year 1 teacher, who was also the leader of English. The teacher in the Early Years Foundation Stage left the school at the end of the summer term. A temporary teacher was appointed to the Early Years Foundation Stage who has also very recently left the school. That teacher was replaced at the beginning of the week of this monitoring inspection by another temporary class teacher, pending a permanent appointment being made. This teacher is working in partnership with a local authority consultant who is based in the class for the majority of each week. The temporary class teacher in Year 4 has left the school and been replaced by a permanently appointed class teacher. Temporary class teachers have been appointed in Year 1 and Year 3, pending the appointment of permanent staff. Two members of staff have been appointed as temporary leaders of English and mathematics, pending the restructure of leadership and management roles.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Observations in lessons, the school's own data analysis and the scrutiny of the work in pupils' books confirm that, although standards have improved and progress has accelerated for some pupils, they are still not good enough for too many.

A challenging period of staffing turbulence in the Early Years Foundation Stage has resulted in uncertainty about the quality of children's learning. The local authority consultant has now ensured an accurate picture has been established of every child's starting point, their future needs and their interests, so that future planning and assessments will have a secure base. These systems are in their very early stages and have yet to demonstrate their impact on children's learning.

The teacher assessments carried out at the end of Year 2 in 2013 confirmed that attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 had risen to above that found in most schools for most children. The results of the phonics screening check made at the end of Year 1 in 2013 were also better than in most schools. However, though, at the time of the last monitoring inspection, teaching and pupils' progress were confirmed to be consistently good in Key Stage 1, evidence in school confirms that this is not currently the case and progress has slowed. The progress that pupils are currently making in their understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) is too variable because the quality of phonics teaching varies from good to inadequate.

The results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2013 confirmed a further decline in attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics. These pupils made inadequate progress and failed to catch up ground lost to underachievement while at the school. Pupils currently in Year 6 also still have a great deal of catching up to do this year to make up for previous underperformance. There are signs in some year groups in Key Stage 2 that progress is accelerating and attainment improving due to improved teaching. However, too much teaching remains which is inadequate or requires improvement, so that progress is not good enough to close the gaps in learning for all groups of pupils. Pupils do well where teaching is stronger and teachers identify and focus on filling the gaps in pupils' basic mathematics and English skills. These teachers give pupils lots of opportunities to solve problems, explain their thinking and to use their skills in challenging and interesting ways in other subjects. Too many instances remain where this is not the case and, as a consequence, too many gaps remain in pupils' basic skills.

Because clear and higher expectations for the presentation of work have been set and pupils are responding positively to the rewards on offer, they are taking more pride in the presentation of their work, especially where teachers are applying the new policy consistently.

The work given to the more-able pupils in lessons is still too often not sufficiently challenging for them to be able to reach the levels of which they are capable. Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils supported by additional pupil premium funding make similar progress to other groups.

The quality of teaching

There has been little overall change in the impact of teaching since the last monitoring inspection visit. There have been improvements due to a combination of the appointment of new permanent staff, effective professional development led by the interim headteacher tailored to meet the individual needs of staff, and the positive response of some existing class teachers to the feedback and development opportunities they have received. However, staffing turbulence and uncertainty, some temporary appointments, and the failure of some staff to implement all of the improvements agreed have resulted in teaching which is still not consistently strong enough to raise the attainment of all pupils.

Some lessons were observed to contain good elements. These included high levels of pupil enjoyment and engagement, and teachers asking well-chosen questions to check understanding, address misconceptions or to challenge pupils to move their learning on. The most effective teachers were seen to be successfully encouraging pupils to develop the skills they need to learn well independently. These teachers carry out the agreed policy for spoken and written feedback so that pupils know what they need to do to improve and have time to respond to teachers' comments. This is not always the case. In addition, there is repeated occurrence of unfinished work in some pupils' workbooks. Features of the weaker lessons seen are similar to those described at the time of the last monitoring inspection visit and include:

- assessments not being used well enough to plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and that build logically the necessary small steps of learning
- 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 being prepared well enough by the class teacher so that they can make their full contribution to ensuring pupils make good progress
- 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' writing skills
- adults being too ready to accept and praise pupils for simplistic answers.

The local authority and the interim headteacher have responded with urgency to the need to make improvements to teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The environment is much improved. Systems are being put in place to strengthen assessment and curriculum planning, and new resources are being acquired.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The new behaviour policy, introduced at the time of the last monitoring inspection visit, is being applied with more consistency and to greater effect. Pupils mostly behave well, and move safely and considerately around the building. There is rarely any behaviour which interferes with learning in lessons. Pupils are given more opportunities to cooperate and collaborate with others, and to talk to each other about their work. A few instances remain where their ability to develop the skills they need to be able to work successfully independently of an adult are not encouraged well enough. Pupils are enjoying the opportunity they have been given to express their views through the newly formed school council.

Attendance is below that seen at the time of the last monitoring inspection and below that seen in most schools. Its improvement is a focus for the interim headteacher.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

In the short time since her appointment, the interim headteacher has focused fully on improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. She has quickly got to grips with what needs to be done, and has taken a good range of appropriate urgent actions. Her observations of the quality of teaching were confirmed as accurate during the monitoring visit. Staff spoken to say that morale has improved. They also say they are getting support which is helping to improve their teaching because it is closely tailored to their needs. She has ensured that school improvement planning meets requirements, though it still lacks precise enough targets to aim for in terms of outcomes for pupils and clear milestones to check on whether improvements are happening quickly enough. Staff have received training in the new tracking system put in place at the time of the last monitoring inspection. However, they have yet to use this system to set targets which can be used to drive improvement plans and to monitor and evaluate how effective the plans are. Leaders for English and mathematics are very new. They are not clear about their roles and responsibilities and have yet to demonstrate their impact on improving outcomes for pupils. Systems for holding staff to account for their performance are also very new.

The temporary governing body has met twice since the last monitoring inspection. Its members have continued to focus heavily on the process of academy conversion at the expense of checking that pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching and learning are improving as quickly as they should. Governors are visiting school but the governing body does not have a programme of monitoring and evaluation in place and governors do not have the information they need to help them hold school leaders and staff to account for the quality of their work. High staff turnover and the difficulty of appointing permanent staff have continued to be barriers to school improvement, though the process for recruiting to all current vacant posts has

begun. Parents spoken to are supportive of the recent changes to the school. They praise the improved communication, and the visibility and accessibility of the new interim headteacher.

External support

The local authority continues to provide useful support to the school. Decisive action has been taken in the face of staffing challenges. For example, in securing the appointment of the current interim headteacher and the continued support of the Local Leader in Education. An Education Quality Adviser has supported the transition of the new headteacher into school. A Primary Service Manager makes weekly visits to the school to provide on-going support for leaders and to evaluate the success of actions taken. Urgent action has been taken to ensure that the requisite support is in place to strengthen provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. A mathematics consultant has helped to improve teaching and learning in mathematics. Parent surgeries have been facilitated. There has been support provided to improve monitoring and evaluation, and the use of data and pupil performance interviews.

The prospective sponsor has included the interim headteacher in training communications, and the director is now a member of the school's temporary governing body.