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Ms Charlotte Krzanicki
Interim Headteacher
Dogsthorpe Junior School
Central Avenue
Dogsthorpe
Peterborough
PE1 4LH

Dear Ms Krzanicki

Special measures monitoring inspection of Dogsthorpe Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 29–30 April 2014, 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 on 20–21 June 2013. 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 making reasonable 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Peterborough.

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that none is inadequate and a high proportion is good or better, by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan work that is at the right level for all pupils
 - tell pupils how long they have to work on tasks and what they have to do to succeed
 - explain ideas clearly, check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions early
 - regularly check pupils' progress in lessons, making sure they are getting on quickly
 - mark work in a way that tells pupils what they need to do to improve it and how to get to the next level.

- Improve liaison between the infant and junior schools so that work planned for Year 3 pupils builds appropriately on their learning in Year 2.

- Improve the leadership of teaching by:
 - ensuring that judgements on the quality of teaching are checked against how well pupils are learning
 - giving teachers more guidance on how to improve and follow up these points rigorously
 - making sure that all staff have access to appropriate training, including the opportunity to observe good and outstanding practice in other schools
 - providing teachers with specific training to improve their skills in the teaching of mathematics.

- Improve the capacity of leaders and the governing body to drive and sustain improvement by:
 - reviewing the structure for senior and middle leaders to make sure that the headteacher has effective and direct support
 - using knowledge and expertise from outside the school to improve leadership at all levels
 - using assessments and records about pupils' progress to identify improvements needed and check that they are working
 - undertaking an external review of governance to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved
 - providing training for the governing body to make sure that governors can check the schools' performance and hold leaders to account for how well the school is doing.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 29–30 April 2014

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior leaders, the senior adviser from the local authority, a group of pupils and members of the interim executive board. Informal discussions were held with parents as they collected their children from school. The inspector gathered evidence to inform judgements about the quality of teaching by visiting all classes and by scrutinising pupils' work. The inspector also observed teaching jointly with the interim headteacher and the deputy headteachers.

Context

Since the last inspection, the substantive headteacher has left the school and an interim headteacher has been appointed. One teacher has left and another has been appointed for the summer term.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils are starting to make better progress in developing reading, writing and mathematics skills. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to achieve higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics than the Year 6 class who left the school in 2013. This is because expectations have been raised and pupils are being taught in groups which make the best use of teachers' expertise. In writing particularly, pupils' work shows they have made rapid progress since new approaches to teaching have engaged them much more strongly in understanding the key elements required for success in their work. Similar improvements are emerging in mathematics. Despite this evident improvement and recent rapid progress, there is still much to be done if the outcomes achieved by this cohort are to match the 2013 national averages.

Teachers are using more accurate information about pupils' progress to plan activities that help them take the next steps in their learning. Because the quality of teaching remains variable, progress is not yet consistent across the school or across all groups of pupils. Further actions are planned by leaders to secure at least expected pupil progress in classes where teaching does still not meet the required standards.

There is no consistent pattern to the achievement of different pupil groups. In some year groups and subjects, pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those whose first

language is not English make slightly less progress than their peers, while in others they make more.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are increasingly well supported within lessons; teachers work with these pupils more often and teaching assistants' work is better focused. As a result, in many instances these pupils are making very good progress.

Pupils across the school are responding to increased expectations of the presentation of their work and of the amount they achieve in lessons. Most pupils' written work reflects increasingly well-developed spelling and grammar skills and the quality of handwriting has improved. Lessons seen during the inspection showed that pupils are being challenged to improve their recall of multiplication facts. However, the teaching of key mathematical understanding is still not good enough in most classes to fill gaps in pupils' learning and accelerate their progress.

The quality of teaching

Observations of teaching, work in pupils' books and discussions with pupils about their learning show that, as a result of the good training provided by senior leaders, the quality of teaching in most classes is improving. New assessment systems are giving teachers better information about pupils' learning because they draw on work completed on a day-to-day basis rather than relying simply on the outcomes of tests or longer pieces of work. New planning is based on accurate and up-to-date information about pupils' progress. Where teaching remains weaker, expectations of pupils' learning are not explained clearly enough and pupils are not challenged quickly enough to move on in their learning. This is particularly the case in some mathematics lessons where pupils eagerly use new calculation strategies to answer questions, but reach incorrect answers because key concepts, such as place value, are not taught or revisited well enough.

Where teaching has significantly improved, teachers explain what pupils are expected to learn clearly and use new systems which engage them in checking and developing their learning throughout lessons. In the best lessons, pupils are using these systems to guide and develop their own work continually. In a Year 6 writing lesson, pupils discussed their work with each other at an advanced level. They checked together to ensure they understood how the new aspects they had been taught could be included in their writing and, as a result, made very good progress. In these lessons, teachers check pupils' understanding regularly and offer swift help to those who struggle. As a result, pupils maintain their focus and motivation, and the off-task behaviour seen at the last visit is much reduced.

The frequency with which children are withdrawn from classes for extra support has been reduced and the work of teaching assistants reviewed. During the inspection

teaching assistants were observed to be making a strong, very well-focused contribution to pupils' learning and progress.

The quality of marking is still too variable. Some teachers have continued with the improving practice seen at the last visit. There are some good examples of this being used very effectively to evaluate how well pupils' key skills in writing and mathematics are used to explore different subjects in 'themed' work. Pupils do not have enough time to respond to the marking of their work; too often the guidance they receive does not help them understand how well they have done or what they need to do next to improve.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

To increase the responsibility pupils take for their own behaviour and to recognise pupils who behave well, the interim headteacher has implemented a new system of behaviour management. Pupils waste less learning time because teachers are taking greater responsibility for managing behaviour in class.

Behaviour around school and at playtimes is calm and happy. Pupils play together well and are caring towards each other. They say changes made recently to how lunchtimes are structured mean they have more time to play and spend less time waiting around. Lunchtime supervisors agree that changes made by the interim headteacher are improving the behaviour and attitudes of pupils.

Pupils are very clear that changes to their classrooms are helping to improve their learning. Classroom displays have been made more relevant and now include examples of work in progress and resources for learning, such as key vocabulary. Pupils say they feel motivated and supported to make better progress. In some classes, they say the new ways teachers are using to show them what successful learning looks like are helping them to better understand what they need to do and to feel more successful in their learning.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

In a very short time, the interim headteacher has raised expectations and motivated staff. Aply supported by the deputy headteachers, she has focused on rapidly improving teaching and learning. Staff expressed overwhelming confidence in the extent to which they now feel empowered and supported to bring about the significant improvements that are necessary.

The short-term action plan is well focused on the key areas of the school's work which need to improve. It sharply identifies appropriate actions, timescales and

responsibilities. However, indicators of success are not clear enough and the action plan has not yet been shared with all staff.

Staff are clear about what is expected of them in relation to the improvements to teaching required and are responding enthusiastically. The better quality of teaching and learning seen on the visit are the result of effective, personalised training which meets the wide range of needs of both experienced and less experienced staff. Whole-school issues have been addressed through tightly planned staff meetings while individual needs have been met through targeted visits to other schools, modelling of good teaching by senior leaders or tightly focused support from local authority advisers. Staff have been encouraged to reflect on their practice and to implement changes to maximise their impact on pupils' learning and progress. While records of monitoring show that teachers receive clear guidance on how to improve, they do not clearly evaluate the impact teaching has on pupils' learning and progress.

Middle leaders have undertaken joint observations and scrutiny of pupils' work and progress with the interim headteacher and deputies. As a result, their monitoring skills have been improved and their inclusion as members of the senior leadership team means that a better range of evidence is taken into account when the school's progress is evaluated. Team leaders have worked with the interim headteacher and deputies to evaluate pupil progress and to identify actions to address underachievement. This distribution and delegation of leadership responsibilities is significantly increasing the school's capacity to improve rapidly.

Arrangements to improve the transition of pupils from the infant school have improved further since the last visit. Teachers from both schools have continued to observe in each other's classes to share knowledge of teaching and assessment which will ensure pupils progress is not interrupted when they change schools. English and mathematics leaders are meeting to develop a curriculum which will ensure progression from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6.

The interim executive board has brokered arrangements for securing the leadership of the school through the appointment of the deputies and the interim headteacher. Members have significant expertise and are using this to provide support, evaluate the progress being made against key priorities, secure leadership and manage the move to sponsored academy status. Minutes of meetings do not identify key actions for board members to take to follow up discussions where concerns and issues are raised.

External support

The local authority monitors the improvement of the school through membership of two senior officers on the interim executive board. The senior school improvement

adviser has continued to provide increasingly responsive support through a team of advisers. There is evidence to show that school leaders are now using their own evaluations to shape and target this work in a highly collaborative approach which is improving the accuracy of assessment as well as specific aspects of teaching.