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Mr P Goulding  
The Headteacher  
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LE12 9DU

Dear Mr Goulding

#### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NEWCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Stephen Parker and Barry Wood, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 27 and 28 February 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2007. 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.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF NEWCROFT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 27 and 28 February 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, other staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, the School Improvement Partner, and a representative of the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since 1 January 2008, the governors have appointed a newly qualified teacher and have begun the process of reducing the number of teaching and learning support assistant hours. The changes will take effect from April 2008.

### Achievement and standards

The rise in standards reported in the last monitoring inspection is being sustained. An increasing number of pupils across the school are reaching the expected levels for their age in English and mathematics, including higher levels. Classwork is now better planned to challenge pupils across the range of ability. In particular, more able pupils are doing better because they are set more difficult work and open ended challenges that catch their interest. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also making expected progress because classwork is carefully adjusted so that they can succeed. The curriculum for mathematics has been extended and pupils are making secure progress in all aspects of the subject. Much better quality of written work is the result of higher expectations for the standard of accuracy and presentation in all subjects. This has had a good impact for instance on standards in science, where older pupils write detailed commentaries on their investigations and produce careful technical drawings. Pupils use the new information and communication technology (ICT) resources confidently, although the range of uses is limited. Although there is some variation in standards attained, evidence from this inspection and current school data on pupils' attainment in Year 2 indicates that standards in reading and writing are average, and they are slightly above in mathematics. Standards in English and mathematics across Years 3, 4 and 5 are broadly average.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- improve standards in English and mathematics across the school – satisfactory.

### Personal development and well-being

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are consistently good. Happy and confident relationships between teacher and pupils support an enthusiastic learning partnership in most classrooms. Around the school, pupils feel safe. There is some occasional boisterous behaviour shown by older boys in the school playground but

this never threatens the strong sense of teamwork between pupils. Moral and social education contributes strongly to pupils' personal development. Opportunities to encourage pupils' spiritual and cultural development are increasing, but pupils' understanding of cultural diversity beyond the local community is limited. Pupils appreciate the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and many do so. However, in Year 2, the time allocated to physical education, including swimming, is below the government target of two hours. The overall rate of attendance is declining from previous years, but is in line with the national average.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved well so that a greater proportion is consistently good. Some lessons have outstanding features. For the most part, lessons are carefully planned with clear objectives. These are shared at the start so that pupils have a clear idea of what they are to learn. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and make good use of resources including the new interactive whiteboards. Good relationships between staff and pupils are found throughout the school, giving the pupils confidence in discussions and activities. Topics are stimulating and often very imaginative so pupils are keen to take part. Some areas of weakness remain. At times, pupils' progress is limited when pace in lessons is pedestrian and teaching is insufficiently challenging. Key factors leading to improved standards include the care that teachers take to check pupils' progress through the lesson, the use of discussion, and the way learning is reviewed at the end of lessons. As part of this improvement, questioning is often used very effectively to probe understanding. Marking is increasingly used to set targets and aspects that are pointed up for improvement are followed up by teachers, so that pupils are benefiting from marking.

The school's procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are now securely in place. Staff have benefited from recent training in interpreting assessment information, including identifying underperformance clearly, so that teachers are well placed to take remedial action. Overall, teachers are making increasingly effective use of the information to plan appropriate work for pupils of differing abilities and identify where extra help is needed. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is monitored regularly and in detail, leading to the setting of good quality targets. Layered targets for English and mathematics in each class are helping pupils to see what is expected of them. Good features are developing in that these broad targets are being further refined through specific targets for individual pupils. Pupils themselves are increasingly involved in assessing and discussing their progress.

The school continues to make good progress in developing its curriculum, which is increasing the pupils' interest and involvement in their learning. The school week now meets the recommended overall time allocation for teaching. In the Foundation Stage, well planned activities ensure that children make a flying start to their school lives. Aided by the improvements in the curriculum, teachers are giving a greater focus to problem solving and developing pupils' greater independence through self directed learning, questioning and research. The acquisition of laptops is encouraging the use of ICT across the curriculum and pupils are enjoying having

improved access to technology in the suite and in classrooms. Senior leaders are keen to improve the curricular provision further, including personal and social education.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 1 to 4 by better matching work to pupils' abilities – good
- adopt a whole school approach to assessing and tracking pupils' progress which is understood and implemented by all staff – good
- ensure that sufficient teaching time is allocated for pupils in Key Stage 2 and that the curriculum is well balanced, especially in Years 3 and 4 – good.

### Leadership and management

The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate energy and commitment to their drive to secure improvement. The school evaluates its work more rigorously so that senior leaders and, increasingly, subject coordinators have a good sense of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The monitoring of teaching is now regular and senior leaders make reliable judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. The judgements are suitably linked to other monitoring procedures, such as the scrutiny of pupils' work and an analysis of pupils' own views through formal interviews. Feedback from this is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The evaluation findings are shared with governors so they have a realistic view of improvements secured since the January 2007 inspection. There are plans for the governing body to be restructured so that governors have a stronger first hand view of how effectively teaching and learning priorities are being tackled, for example through strengthening subject links and dialogue with coordinators. The governing body receives a range of information and is beginning to hold the school to account, but this aspect needs to be demonstrated further, for instance through a scrutiny of the attainment and assessment data presented to governors. The procedures for school self-evaluation are wide ranging, including finding out what parents think of the school's provision. The headteacher's evaluation of progress for this monitoring inspection was detailed and based on good evidence. The school's self-evaluation form is being developed and needs to be finalised in order for the improvements and priorities to be shared more effectively.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- ensure that the leadership team adopts a rigorous approach to monitoring standards and the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school – good
- implement more rigorous self-evaluation procedures – good.

### External support

The local authority is working in partnership with the school. The school is less reliant on comprehensive support from the LA. Specific help for improving teaching and learning has been more finely tuned and matched to needs that the senior leaders themselves have identified. The local authority support for a review of the provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been well judged and is having a positive impact.

## Priorities for further improvement

The priorities remain those identified in the January 2007 inspection.