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Mrs Alex Lightbown  
Aslacton Primary School  
Church Road  
Aslacton  
Norfolk  
NR15 2JH

Dear Mrs Lightbown

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Aslacton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2008. 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.

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 Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Aslacton Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 10–11 March

## Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, a group of governors, a group of parents and local authority representatives. All lessons observations were joint observations with the headteacher. 4 hours 15 minutes of learning was observed.

## Context

There have been no changes in the context of the school. However the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 teacher is currently on sick leave. The partnership headteacher has ensured continuity of provision for the class by using an experienced early years teacher from the partnership school alongside a regular supply teacher to provide cover during this teacher's absence. Parents say they are happy with this arrangement and that their children are enjoying having different teachers working with them. Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 were not inspected during this visit but will be fully evaluated, with the rest of the school, at the next monitoring inspection.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

There was no new national data available for the school at the time of this monitoring inspection. However, the school's very robust records indicate that pupils are making good progress in mathematics and writing, and are on track to attain above average standards by the end of Key Stage 2. This is confirmed through classroom observations and work in books. This is a better and more secure picture than seen at the time of the last monitoring inspection. However a legacy of underachievement means there are still gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. The one-to-one tuition and good teaching in lessons is having a positive impact on closing these gaps in knowledge and understanding. There also remains the issue of over-assessment, particularly of pupil's writing, when the current Year 4, 5, and 6 were in Year 2. The school are aware of this and realise that it makes it more difficult to determine pupils' rate of progress since then. However there is clear evidence through careful scrutiny of pupils' writing in these year groups that they have made good progress since the first monitoring inspection in May 2009.

All pupils have a good understanding of their current level and what they need to do to improve further.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards in pupils' writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 - good



## Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and often outstanding. They are polite and courteous and engage confidently in conversation with adults. There have been no exclusions since the previous visit. Attendance is good and pupils enjoy coming to school. They say teachers make learning fun and their enjoyment of all their lessons is evident in their enthusiasm to learn. Parents say their children cannot wait to get to school each day. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and enjoy the wide range of after school clubs and activities provided for them. The new ECO Council is enabling them to work more closely with pupils in the partnership school as well as raising their awareness of environmental issues.

Pupils show extremely positive attitudes in lessons and usually collaborate well in groups or with their learning partners. Attitudes to learning are good and all groups of pupils say the learning targets they are given have just the right amount of challenge. Pupils are developing independent learning skills; however very occasionally when they find a task particularly exciting, they do not focus as well as they could on the task given. The school is aware of this and is already developing strategies to ensure good learning behaviour in every part of the lesson.

## The effectiveness of provision

Teaching has improved considerably since the last monitoring inspection. Teachers are now consistently using information about the level at which pupils are working to inform their planning and this is one of the factors contributing to the good progress pupils are making. Lessons are very carefully planned, with a range of activities provided to meet the needs of differing abilities. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and pupils quickly get on with the work teachers give them. Learning objectives are explained very clearly and pupils help to decide upon 'steps to success' which they use to check that they are achieving the objectives of the lesson. Teachers now ensure that they include additional challenge for the more able within these 'steps to success'. This is an improvement since the last monitoring inspection. Pupils really enjoy the additional challenge which has had the effect of raising their aspirations because they all want to achieve the more challenging target, as seen, for example, in a maths lesson where most pupils achieved the higher level target. There is now a very good balance between teacher input and pupil activities. Drama is used very well to enable pupils to structure their ideas before they write and boys are finding this particularly useful in helping them to achieve better results. Learning partners, where pupils talk about the questions posed by teachers, are used exceptionally well. This approach ensures that pupils think things through for themselves, becoming more resilient and independent learners, rather than relying on teachers to give them the answers. Well trained teaching assistants are skilfully deployed in all lessons.



Assessment has improved significantly since the last monitoring inspection. Teachers give very constructive feedback to pupils about how they are getting on and where they need to improve, particularly in mathematics. Whilst this is also the case in writing lessons, pupils are not always given time to make the improvements based upon teachers' comments. This is holding back pupils' progress in writing.

The school continues to develop clear links between subjects in the curriculum; for example in a literacy lesson where knowledge gained in science and geography lessons was used well to develop pupils' skills in writing information texts.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement at Key Stage 2 – good
- Fully involve pupils in understanding their own learning and development - good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The outstanding leadership of the partnership headteacher has ensured good progress since the last monitoring inspection. She has an excellent knowledge of the school because she has made a detailed analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; for example, her accurate judgements about the quality of teaching. She has worked exceptionally well with the staff and governors to eradicate the weakness in teaching which has resulted in the current good progress pupils are making. Parents are very pleased with her approach and say she has successfully maintained the very positive ethos of the school, whilst ensuring there is a clear focus on raising standards and improving the progress their children are making. Staff continue to be fully engaged with the ambition for school improvement and have worked extremely hard to make the required changes to their practice. They are much more confident than at the time of the last monitoring inspection and talk about their renewed enthusiasm for teaching. Subject leaders understand what needs to be done in their role, but because the focus has rightly been on improving teaching and learning they have not yet fully developed this role. They are continuing to benefit from the support and encouragement of experienced subject leaders in the partnership school and are less dependent on support from local authority advisers than at the time of the last monitoring inspection. The partnership headteacher is also increasing the skills within the senior leadership team through the involvement of the assistant headteacher from the partnership school.

There have been improvements in governance since the last monitoring inspection and governors have a satisfactory understanding of their role. For example, each governor is responsible for monitoring an aspect of the school improvement development plan. They have increased their understanding of how to hold the school to account, but are not yet able to talk in detail about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Thanks to the excellent leadership of the partnership headteacher, the good impact of her work within the school so far and the continued development of governors and subject leaders, the school is further developing its



capacity to sustain improvement. The school fully complies with current requirements for safeguarding.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Create a leadership team capable of developing, monitoring and evaluating the work of the school in order to raise and sustain the achievement and standards of all pupils - good

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support for the school. Primary strategy consultants work alongside teachers to support planning and teaching. The school adviser ensures the school is continuing to improve.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further increase the rate of learning and progress for all pupils in Key Stage 2 in writing by ensuring they have the opportunity to evaluate and improve their writing during lessons.
- Continue to develop subject leaders so that they are confident in managing and developing their subjects.
- Ensure that governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are proactive in helping the school to improve.