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17 June 2011

Mrs V Pilkington-Smith  
Headteacher  
Larkholme Primary School  
Windermere Avenue  
Fleetwood  
Lancashire  
FY7 8QB

Dear Mrs Pilkington-Smith,

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Larkholme Primary School**

Following my visit with Mr Derek Barnes, additional inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 June 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2009. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - good

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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth James  
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2009**

- Raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school by improving the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum and by effectively monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that learning is good by:
  - matching work more effectively to pupils' needs
  - improving teachers' understanding of and the use of assessment to identify precisely pupils' next steps in learning
  - eradicating inadequate teaching.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in developing their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the transition into Year 1 by providing a stimulating learning environment and teaching programme so that all children achieve well in their learning and development.
- Ensure that all those who lead and manage the school evaluate and monitor pupils' progress, putting in place effective targets and procedures to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can.

## **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Larkholme Primary School**

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 June 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Thirteen lessons were observed, taught by twelve different teachers. Inspectors also observed other aspects of the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other school staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection the new deputy headteacher has taken up her post. One class teacher has returned from a long-term sickness absence.

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

Standards in Year 6 remain below average. Teacher assessment data suggest that this year a higher proportion of pupils will reach the expected level in English than last year, but fewer are expected to reach the higher Level 5. Attainment in mathematics is likely to be similar to last year. Although standards for this cohort are low, the school's own data and analyses show that most of these pupils are making the expected rates of progress taking into account their starting points at the end of Key Stage 1.

Across the school as a whole, although the picture is uneven, standards are improving and data from the most recent round of assessments show that increasing proportions of pupils are reaching the levels expected of their age group. Outcomes for the Early Years Foundation Stage are particularly encouraging.

The gradual rise in standards is the result of more rapid rates of progress which are now becoming evident in more classes and year groups. Better quality teaching and targeted interventions are increasingly effective in compensating for past underachievement. Lesson observations confirm that pupils are making better progress in more of their lessons but some inconsistencies remain.

Most pupils take pride in their work and are keen to do well. One Year 4 pupil spoke enthusiastically about improving handwriting as a result of clear guidance on letter formation. The volume of written work in books continues to vary but teachers' expectations are rising. Pupils enjoy a range of subjects. Attitudes to learning are positive and this is an important factor contributing to the overall picture of improvement.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school by improving the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum and by effectively monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's work – satisfactory

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Behaviour observed around school and in lessons was good and often exemplary. In the majority of lessons pupils cooperated very well, worked conscientiously and were rarely off task. Discussions with pupils confirmed that for the vast majority incidents of significant misbehaviour are rare.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching continues to improve and a higher proportion of good teaching was seen during this inspection. Teachers' skills and confidence have improved and in the best lessons teachers are quick to adapt their teaching as they assess the progress individuals are making. Learning objectives are clear and are shared with pupils. Success criteria are often used and help pupils to understand clearly what they need to do. Teachers are increasingly able to differentiate work to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, and support from teaching assistants is generally targeted and effective. Nevertheless, on occasion, plenaries with the whole class do not stretch the more able and may be difficult for the least able to access, especially if they have been doing different work in the preceding part of the lesson.

Weaknesses in teaching seen on previous visits were observed far less frequently during this inspection. Within the overall picture of improvement, the quality of teaching in some classes remains weaker than elsewhere and inadequate teaching has not yet been eradicated. On occasion, individual work is not checked carefully enough when teachers circulate and monitor during independent work, especially in mathematics. There were instances where pupils' errors or misunderstandings were not picked up and addressed and in one case a pupil was commended even though some answers were incorrect.

Although progress in lessons is accelerating the school continues to make much use of a number of intervention groups to support those pupils who are underachieving. The impact of these interventions is now being monitored and evaluated more carefully and there are examples where this work has enabled pupils to make significant gains.

Marking has improved and some good examples of specific feedback were seen with evidence that pupils had followed this up. In some books, however, while good work and effort are praised, feedback where work is poor or incorrect is too vague.

In discussion with groups of pupils of different ages it was clear that the improved curriculum has increased enjoyment and engagement. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about

the use made of information and communication technology through the class sets of netbooks, although some reported rather more frequent use than others.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is now resulting in much better progress as recent assessments show. Better teaching and an improved curriculum combined with effective targeted work with individuals have all contributed to this. Transition into the Reception classes from the independent nursery on site and elsewhere is well managed.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching so that learning is good – satisfactory
- ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in developing their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills – satisfactory
- improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the transition into Year 1 by providing a stimulating learning environment and teaching programme so that all children achieve well in their learning and development – good

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leadership and management have been strengthened considerably since the previous monitoring inspection. The new deputy headteacher has taken up her post. She brings a range of experience and skills to the school and this is already beginning to have an impact. For example, evaluation of her intervention work with Year 6 pupils shows that this has accelerated progress very effectively for most of those involved. More recently her contribution to the teaching of Year 4 is helping to raise expectations and provide a clearer focus on the individual needs of different pupils. The headteacher's skill in leading and managing improvement within the school has developed well and the need for external support has reduced considerably. The headteacher's view of the school's progress is broadly accurate and there is a good understanding of where to target improvement strategies and how to approach these successfully.

Targets continue to be used appropriately in the main but in some instances these could be more challenging in terms of the drive to raise standards. Systematic formal assessments are collated twice a term and analysed very thoroughly. The data are used well to identify those who are still underachieving and to plan improvements. For example, recent analyses revealed some weaknesses in progress in mathematics in Year 5 and have led to specific intervention work with these pupils. However, the wealth of data and the different analyses can sometimes make it difficult to gain an overview of both progress and the proportions reaching age-related expectations and there is a need to ensure that the data are well understood by all relevant staff. Recognition of the need to review progress from the start of the key stage, rather than just the start of the year, is now evident in the data analysis. This is helping to ensure that tackling historic underachievement remains a clear priority.

The school's strong focus on improving the quality of teaching is paying dividends. The relentless drive for improvement has had a clear impact and far more good teaching was seen during this inspection. Subject coordination continues to develop. In mathematics,

there is now a bigger focus on developing mathematics skills through other areas of the curriculum. The mathematics coordinator has supported teachers in various ways, most recently by identifying topics for each year group where mathematics skills should be incorporated and applied. The leadership of literacy is about to be taken on by the new deputy. However, there is a lack of clarity around leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The governing body continues to provide support and challenge and is increasingly involved in the life of the school. Policies continue to be reviewed appropriately resulting in recent changes to the behaviour policy.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that all those who lead and manage the school evaluate and monitor pupils' progress, putting in place effective targets and procedures to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can – good

### **External support**

Local authority advisers have provided very valuable support since the school was made subject to special measures. Their increasing confidence in the school's ability to manage its own improvement means that the level of support has now reduced significantly. Consultants' advice and training continues to be provided for specific purposes at the school's request such as boys' writing and developing mathematics skills through science. Adviser support continues to be available where needed, for example, as confirmation of the school's own assessment of the quality of teaching. The local authority has provided regular, realistic evaluations of progress which are helpful to senior leaders and the governing body.