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Ms S M Morrison
Headteacher
Eyres Monsell Primary School
Simmins Crescent
Leicester
LE2 9AH

Dear Ms Morrison

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Eyres Monsell Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14–15 March 2012, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2011. 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 – 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2011

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' progress to raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - raising the overall quality of teaching to at least good
 - ensuring that work is more closely planned to match pupils' needs and interests, particularly for boys
 - providing frequent opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - reviewing and revising current procedures taking into account the views of pupils, parents and carers and staff
 - re-establishing an agreed code of conduct of behaviour, rewards and sanctions
 - ensuring that all staff consistently apply the agreed strategies.

- Strengthen the school's self-evaluation by:
 - focusing on pupils' progress in all monitoring and evaluation activities making judgements on progress explicit
 - fine-tuning the monitoring and evaluation skills of middle leaders.

- Improve attendance by:
 - working more closely with parents and carers whose children attend less regularly
 - making parents and carers more aware of their responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Special measures: monitoring of Eyres Monsell Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 14–15 March 2012

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, five members of the governing body, pupils, parents and carers, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, one teacher has left the school. The deputy headteacher has returned following a long-term absence.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Senior leaders have acted to address issues identified at the last monitoring visit and implemented a range of suitable strategies to raise standards and accelerate rates of progress. For example, targeted support to improve the teaching of mathematics in Years 3 and 4 has ensured that work set for these pupils matches the needs of all abilities, and improved systems for tracking pupils' progress mean that all teachers know how well each pupil is attaining compared with age-related expectations. At pupil progress meetings, there is a sharp focus on how well individuals are progressing towards ambitious targets. Such actions have led to improved achievement since the previous monitoring inspection. School data show that, although current attainment remains low, more pupils throughout the school are working at the levels expected for their ages in English and mathematics. For example, in Year 3, the proportion reading at the expected level has doubled and similar progress has been made in writing in Years 5 and 6. This more positive picture matches evidence from lesson observations and work scrutiny that pupils are making better progress. In eight of 11 lessons observed, learning was good or better. The school recognises the need to sustain this progress in order to narrow the gap between what pupils in the school attain and pupils' attainment nationally. This is particularly important for boys and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, because the attainment of these groups is below that of others in the school. The legacy of poor provision in the past is most evident in the attainment of pupils in Years 2 and 4, where attainment remains low.

The attainment of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 is closer to national expectations than in other year groups. High-quality teaching of the sounds letters make (phonics), and regular opportunities for children to read with an adult, are promoting good achievement in reading and writing. However, throughout the rest of the school, there are pupils whose progress in reading is

more limited because they are not being heard to read individually by an adult with sufficient regularity.

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

- accelerate the rate of pupils' progress to raise attainment in English and mathematics – good.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous monitoring inspection. At that time, weaknesses included teachers spending too long introducing activities and so giving pupils little time to apply and practise their skills. Lessons now proceed at a brisk pace, with a good balance between whole-class teaching and independent work. A second weakness was the low expectation of what disabled pupils and those with special educational needs could achieve independently. In the great majority of lessons, there is now good provision for this group because adults working with them ensure that pupils have opportunities to organise their own learning and to complete tasks without direct support. A third weakness was the overuse of whiteboards and 'Post-it' notes when pupils were recording their ideas. Throughout the school, pupils are now much more consistently recording in books, including during phonic sessions. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1, the emphasis on correct letter formation and joining letters is helping children to become confident writers of simple sentences.

There are some common strengths in the most effective teaching. Teachers plan for four different levels of abilities in English and mathematics lessons and explain clearly what pupils of different abilities are expected to learn by the end of the lesson. They make learning fun by giving pupils opportunities to be active learners, sometimes working away from their desks and collaborating with others to secure the learning objectives. These activities demonstrate how the school is now more successfully matching the curriculum to pupils' interests, particularly boys. Teachers also use a range of strategies to check pupils' understanding during the lesson. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children benefit from a good range of activities, both indoors and in the imaginatively organised outdoor area. There is an effective balance between adult-led activities and those children can choose for themselves, which ensures all areas of learning are covered while giving good opportunities for language development.

Where learning is no better than satisfactory, the factors acting as barriers to better progress include:

- learning activities that do not excite the pupils or match well with the intended learning objectives

- inconsistency in the opportunities for pupils to apply their phonic skills when writing in their books
- insufficiently high expectations regarding pupils' letter formation and ability to join letters
- limited expectation that pupils will act upon written responses to their work
- inconsistencies in the quality of provision for pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school is sustaining the gains in attendance noted in letters following the previous two visits. In the last school year, attendance was 92.5%. Attendance this school year is over 95%. There are currently no pupils who are persistently absent. The school has case studies that demonstrate how the work of the attendance officer has secured average attendance rates for pupils who were previously persistently absent and how the learning mentor has acted to improve the punctuality of latecomers. There are few latecomers and no patterns of poor punctuality among the handful of pupils who are late.

Most pupils are responding well to the new behaviour policy. They are keen to share when they have received house points for good work and helpful behaviour. They enjoy the weekly assemblies where the whole school celebrates the success of pupils and the winning house. One parent raised a concern that, in the drive to raise attainment, a few adults are too harsh in their dealings with pupils. This matter was investigated thoroughly. Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. However, pupils comment that a small number of boys in their classes do occasionally disturb lessons and can be a nuisance on the playground. The inability of these pupils to manage their behaviour appropriately has led to the ending of football games on the playground. However, there are encouraging signs of improving behaviour. Behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons are always at least satisfactory. There has been just one instance of exclusion this term. During the same period last year, there were 13 exclusions. At the time of the previous monitoring visit, high numbers of pupils were regularly missing playtimes because of their behaviour. This is no longer the case.

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

- improve pupils' attendance – satisfactory
- improve pupils' behaviour – satisfactory.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The pace of change has accelerated since the last visit. Much of this is due the determination shown by the headteacher. Following the previous monitoring

inspection, she has taken decisive action to tackle weaknesses in provision. Staff share her high expectations for the pupils and are committed to raising achievement. The headteacher is well supported by members of the senior leadership team. The successful development of their monitoring and evaluation skills enables them to play an appropriate part in self-evaluation procedures. For example, they conduct lesson observations and work scrutiny. They also contribute strongly to pupil progress meetings, where teachers are held to account for the performance of pupils in their class.

The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The school also has a well-above average proportion of pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The special educational needs coordinator has day-to-day responsibility for both areas and, in addition, regularly covers classes to allow teachers time for planning, preparation and assessment. The challenge of these roles has meant that, while she has provided training for staff supporting pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, she has not had sufficient opportunities to quality assure the impact of training provided. She has carried out a review of pupils in the school identified as having special educational needs to ensure that pupils who simply require better teaching are no longer being wrongly identified as having special educational needs.

Governance has strengthened. There is a considerable range of expertise and experience on the governing body and, consequently, a clear understanding among governors of their role and responsibilities. Senior leaders regularly meet with the governing body and provide it with analyses of pupils' progress and outcomes from monitoring. This is enabling governors to ask informed questions. In addition, individual governors conduct visits to school to gather evidence about its progress towards resolving the key issues identified when the school was inspected in February 2011. Through all of these activities, the governing body is holding the school to account for the achievement of pupils.

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

- strengthen the school's procedures for self-evaluation – good.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support that has helped secure improvements in all of the areas identified in the inspection of February 2011. The expertise of its consultants has led to improvements in the teaching of mathematics and English, and the effectiveness of the school's leaders and managers. The behaviour support team and the education welfare officer have continued to support the school as necessary and so helped to sustain the improvements in behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Monitoring of the school's performance, led by the School Improvement Adviser, is rigorous and accurate. The subsequent reports give the governing body and the school's leaders helpful pointers for improvement.