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23 April 2012

Mrs Lizzie Blount  
Headteacher  
Croft Primary School  
Station Road  
Sutton-in-Ashfield  
NG17 5FJ

Dear Mrs Blount

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

Following my visit with Alan Brewerton, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19–20 April 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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 Nottinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2011**

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress through the school, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that the teaching is consistently good, based on:
  - using information about the levels at which pupils are working to provide activities that match closely to their abilities and provide a good level of challenge
  - setting targets in literacy and numeracy which are known and understood by pupils and of which they have ownership
  - marking that informs pupils regularly of their achievements and the next steps in learning.
  
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school and provide support for the headteacher in her drive to raise attainment levels, by making sure that:
  - senior leaders have roles, responsibilities and accountability for moving the school forward in key aspects of school improvement, including the quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment
  - middle leaders have greater impact on improving the outcomes in subjects for which they are responsible
  - the governing body monitors and evaluates the school's performance comprehensively so that it can challenge the school and influence its direction.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Croft Primary School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 19–20 April 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority's Education Improvement Adviser. Inspectors visited all classes to observe teaching and learning and evaluated a sample of pupils' work.

#### **Context**

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to the senior leadership team. Two former assistant headteachers resigned from their leadership responsibilities immediately following the previous inspection, but remain in class teaching posts at the school. A seconded deputy headteacher has been in post since February 2012. A new substantive deputy headteacher has subsequently been appointed to take up post in September 2012. A new subject leader in mathematics has been appointed from within the school. The restructured senior leadership team now consists of the headteacher, deputy headteacher, Early Years Foundation Stage leader, mathematics subject leader and two literacy subject leaders, who share this role. One member of staff is on maternity leave.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Attainment remains low and below the levels expected for the pupils' ages. The school has begun to put procedures in place to tackle underachievement but, as yet, they are not consistently applied and the school does not hold teachers rigorously to account for the progress pupils are making. Consequently, the new procedures are not having a strong enough impact on raising achievement.

Rates of progress over time and in lessons are often too slow. The quality of some pupils' work seen in their books is weak and teachers' assessments are sometimes too generous. In some lessons, pupils' poor basic skills such as handwriting, spelling and punctuation limit their progress and the presentation of work is untidy, showing that they do not take pride in their work. In some mathematics lessons observed, pupils struggled to recall simple mental calculations such as number bonds and did not demonstrate that they understood an appropriate range of strategies to solve simple problems.

The latest school data indicate that a greater proportion of pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2 are beginning to make satisfactory progress. However, the lessons observed indicate that too many inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and learning across the school because expectations of what pupils can and should be achieving

are still too low. As a result, too many pupils continue to make inadequate progress. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls and attainment for both remains below the expected levels. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make similar progress to their peers.

Systems are being introduced to undertake regular assessments and to ensure that all staff know what pupils can do and should be able to do. Staff are increasingly involved in assessing learning at regular times throughout the year. However, this work is at an early stage and current internal assessment information, although improving, requires further refinement.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching and learning remains too uneven across the school and teaching is not good enough to move pupils' learning on at a fast enough pace to overcome the underachievement that persists. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection ranged from inadequate to good. The school has introduced a number of initiatives to bring about improvement and although there are signs of some improvement, the impact of these new developments remains inconsistent because inadequate teaching has not been eradicated. Although there is evidence of some accelerated progress, particularly in Year 2 and Year 6, this is not consistent through the school in all year groups.

Teachers' planning is not yet secure as new systems introduced since the previous inspection are not consistently applied across the school. Learning objectives are shared at the beginning of most lessons. Success criteria are not always defined sharply enough for different groups of pupils and pupils do not always understand the 'steps for success'. In too many lessons, teachers lack precision in the way they present activities that support the learning of pupils of different abilities. Consequently, pupils' understanding is limited and they are unsure about what they have learnt. In most lessons, there are positive relationships between pupils and adults. Where teaching is good, for example in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are enthusiastic learners and enjoy purposeful learning activities that are carefully planned for them based on accurate assessment.

The use of assessment to guide teachers' planning and to check pupils' understanding remains weak. Too frequently, work is not well matched to the range of pupils' attainment. Too many opportunities are missed to evaluate how well pupils are making progress in lessons. As a result, assessments of pupils' progress are not firmly rooted in first-hand evidence or lessons planned to meet the needs of all pupils.

There have been some improvements to the school's approach to marking. However, marking is not yet consistently linked to pupils' targets or success criteria and rarely contains specific comments that ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. Senior leaders are aware that this is an area which requires further work to ensure that consistently good practice is embedded throughout the

school, so that it has full impact on raising attainment. Pupils are aware of their targets but do not feel that they have ownership of them because they are not involved in setting their targets or in identifying their achievements.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress through the school, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that the teaching is consistently good – inadequate.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are polite and friendly and generally respond well to the behaviour management routines being used. Their attitudes to learning reflect the low demands placed upon them and they are relaxed rather than focused and enthusiastic learners. Pupils enjoy good friendships because there is little intimidating behaviour and they feel safe at school.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

The headteacher and senior leaders, supported by the local authority, are beginning to bring a clearer sense of direction and educational purpose to the school's work. Senior leaders are beginning to have a greater awareness of the issues raised at the last inspection and how they might be tackled to bring about secure and sustained improvements. They have introduced a number of important developments such as changes to teachers' planning, arrangements for managing pupils' behaviour and systems for assessing pupils' progress more regularly. These actions have the potential to raise standards and hold teachers to account but, to date, they have not had a sufficiently positive impact on eliminating weaknesses, particularly in teaching and learning.

Since the appointment of a seconded deputy headteacher in February 2012, leadership roles have been reviewed. However, the school's leaders have not moved the school forward quickly enough. This is because subject leaders, who are embraced within the senior leadership team, do not have any non-contact time to carry out their duties and some senior leaders do not demonstrate that they have the necessary capacity to influence or drive the improvements that are urgently required. The local authority is aware that further support is needed at senior leadership level to increase the pace of change and to successfully address the weaknesses in pupils' outcomes and in the quality of teaching and learning.

New systems for monitoring teaching and learning have been established since the previous inspection. However, these systems lack the rigour required to secure consistently good teaching in all classes. For example, where satisfactory teaching has been observed, the recorded areas for development are not sufficiently detailed or prioritised as targets for improvement, and there are no review dates for following

up whether teachers have improved their practice. Additionally, the impact of teaching on the pupils' learning and their progress in lessons is not given sufficient priority in written records of monitoring and evaluation activities.

The school improvement plan has been recently updated to reflect the key issues for improvement from the last inspection and links well with the local authority's action plan. However, although the plan contains regular milestones, it does not contain success criteria against which each action step can be measured and progress checked.

The governing body is supportive of the school and has quickly come to terms with the changes that are required to eliminate weaknesses and improve the quality of education at the school. The Chair of the Governing Body confirms that there is now a sharper focus in meetings on how well the school is tackling areas for improvement from the last inspection. The new school improvement committee is supporting governors effectively in their understanding of the challenges facing the school and how they can increase their effectiveness by holding the school more rigorously to account.

Parents and carers who shared their views with inspectors were generally positive about the work of the school.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school and provide support for the headteacher in her drive to raise attainment levels – inadequate.

### **External support**

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose and provides a good framework for improvement. It is being closely followed by local authority officers who are working with the school. The Education Improvement Adviser has undertaken joint monitoring visits to classrooms with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Monitoring of the school's performance by the local authority is rigorous and accurate. Regular reports from the Education Improvement Adviser provide the governing body and the school's leaders with helpful pointers for improvement. However, senior leaders have not responded fully to this support and advice, particularly in relation to teaching and learning. The school is also receiving support from a Local Leader of Education school through a school-to-school partnership.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

Priorities remain those identified at the time of the last inspection.