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12 July 2012

Mr Nairn
Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School
St Davids Road
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NN2 7QL

Dear Mr Nairn

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School

Following my visit with Peter Lawley Additional Inspector, to your school on 10–11 July 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 28 February 2012. 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

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed in Key Stages 1 or 2. 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 Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Heather Weston
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2012

- By January 2013, raise the quality of teaching to be consistently good by:
 - ensuring that teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - strengthening teachers' planning so that in all lessons activities provide a match to the different abilities of pupils in each class
 - improve teachers' questioning skills to ensure that they consistently demand extended answers from pupils
 - make all teachers' marking as good as the best in the school by ensuring that good quality guidance is given for pupils' next steps in learning.

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that in mathematics pupils' calculation and practical and investigational skills are improved
 - developing the curriculum for mathematics so that work becomes progressively more difficult as pupils move up the school
 - strengthening pupils' grammar and punctuation in their writing.

- By January 2013, raise levels of attendance to at least the national average.

- By September 2012, improve governance of the school by:
 - developing a wide-ranging monitoring of the school's provision, pupils' achievement and the school's leadership and management
 - devising and implementing a sustainable longer-term financial management plan to reduce surpluses to 8%.

- By January 2013, strengthen the leadership and management roles of subject leaders by providing training in their monitoring and evaluation role.

Special measures: monitoring of Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 July 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work. They scrutinised work in pupils' books, observed teaching and learning and examined documents including pupil tracking data, records of monitoring, governing body minutes and reports from local authority advisers. Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders, achievement team leaders, the advanced skills teacher and the specialist teacher for mathematics, subject leaders, groups of staff, pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and Chairs of the Standards and Finance Committees, and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2012, two new permanent members of staff have joined the school as class teachers. One member of staff is on long term sick leave, due to return to work in September, and one member of staff is on a phased return from sick leave.

Discussions are taking place regarding the closure of the school in December 2012 and its re-opening as an academy in January 2013.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress, although still variable, has improved throughout the school. School data and pupils' work show that standards are rising at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is now broadly similar to that of all pupils nationally in all areas. Likewise, inspectors saw evidence that attainment at the end of Year 6 has risen in both English and mathematics. Although remaining significantly lower than pupils nationally it appears that the gap between the school and national standards has been halved.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs in mainstream classes are making better progress particularly in the designated special provision unit (DSP). The introduction of targeted support for pupils with English as an additional language means that these pupils now make much improved progress.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Due to rigorous action on the part of the extended leadership team, the quality of teaching and learning is now much improved. It is good in the large majority of lessons and outstanding in a few and as a result, standards are beginning to rise.

Teachers plan learning to meet the needs of most pupils in their classes although too few are doing so sufficiently for more able pupils. Teachers now adapt their questioning to individual pupils. In those lessons which are good or better, teachers challenge all groups of pupils equally by expecting extended answers to often very demanding questions. For example in one outstanding lesson, pupils in a Year 3 class used sophisticated reasoning skills to explain why a cake was burnt when taken out of the oven. Increasingly pupils are learning not only to apply their skills in a range of contexts but also to explain which skills they use and why. Pupils are increasingly aware of grammatical structure and the need for accurate punctuation. They are confident in using terms such as adjective, simile, adverb and subordinate clause at age appropriate levels. Some weaknesses in spelling are evident due to a lack of emphasis on the correct spelling of both frequently used words and technical vocabulary. Pupils' learning is enhanced through the use of targets, and through improved guidance regarding the next steps in their learning, both verbally and in teachers' marking. All teachers use agreed procedures but not all are checking regularly that pupils both respond to and regularly follow their guidance.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- by January 2013, raise the quality of teaching to be consistently good – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. In lessons, pupils show a real interest in their work and engage well with their learning. In the best lessons their engagement is tangible and they work with total absorption, for example when explaining true or false answers to mathematical questions.

The introduction of 'late gates', supervised by a member of the senior leadership team has significantly reduced lateness. Concerted action has reduced persistent absence to less than half the national average, and improved overall attendance to just below average. Parents know there is no excuse for their children to arrive late or to unnecessarily miss school.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- by January 2013, raise levels of attendance to at least the national average – good.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Team working between the headteacher and senior and extended leadership teams is highly effective. Close communication ensures that identified weaknesses are acted upon swiftly. The advanced skills and specialist mathematics teachers contribute well to the extended leadership team, as do the achievement leaders. This team has provided good support to teachers to improve practice whilst remaining vigilant in informing senior leaders of barriers to pupils' learning with regard to teaching. Most inadequate teaching has been eradicated, and action to address any remaining weaknesses is planned to continue next term. Teachers' marking and lesson planning have both been improved and are more consistent.

The school's improvement plan is strategic, and well set out with tight performance indicators and clearly stated relevant actions. Self-evaluation is accurate, and based on effective monitoring by senior leaders and governors. Governors now challenge leaders regarding their findings, asking relevant questions about progress and standards and raising questions about identified omissions. A sustainable three year financial plan is in place. Surplus funding has been allocated to enhance learning, for example by employing additional teachers to reduce class size in Year 6, and to provide support for pupils with English as an additional language. In addition the school has necessarily purchased a wide range of resources, including mathematical equipment and up-to-date computer hardware. Budget surpluses have been reduced to 4%.

An appropriate, satisfactory curriculum for mathematics, which ensures learning becomes progressively more difficult, has been established. Strong attention has been paid to ensuring that the new calculation policy is implemented and that pupils have opportunities to apply their skills in practical, investigational activities. In one outstanding Year 6 lesson, pupils not only devised ways to calculate perimeters but also discovered how to apply algebraic symbols to the measurement of square and rectangular areas.

Subject leadership has been re-allocated. Subject leaders have received training from an external consultant and, with additional modelling from senior leaders, are now in a position to implement their roles. Teachers are increasingly aware of their responsibility in terms of improving their practice to increase pupil progress. Morale in the school is high, with all groups of staff recognising, valuing and sharing the high expectations of the headteacher and leaders.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- by September 2012, improve governance of the school - good
- by January 2013, strengthen the leadership and management roles of subject leaders by providing training in their monitoring and evaluation role - satisfactory

External support

Action by the local authority has been strategic and effective. Recognising the quality of action planning and the calibre of leaders, the local authority has provided challenge in terms of monitoring and evaluating the impact of action and progress towards each of the areas for improvement. This is in line with the statement of action, which is fit for purpose. Support has been restricted to ensuring that the school is accessing advice from human resources and financial services. External consultants have been effective when training subject leaders and in working with the school to develop a revised curriculum, due to be implemented in September 2012.