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25 September 2012

Mrs N Kandola  
Headteacher  
Avenue Primary School  
Avenue Road Extension  
Leicester  
LE2 3EJ

Dear Mrs Kandola

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Avenue Primary School**

Following my visit with David Lewis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 September 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**  
**Annex**

**The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took**

## **place in March 2012**

- Improve teaching and accelerate the progress made by all pupils, but particularly for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Year 2, by:
  - making effective use of assessment data to set suitably challenging targets and activities for all groups of pupils
  - checking on pupils' learning more frequently during lessons so that activities can be adapted to their individual needs
  - ensuring that teachers' marking clearly shows pupils what they need to do to improve their work and meet their targets
  - ensuring that teaching assistants contribute to pupils' learning in lessons.
  
- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels, including members of the governing body, accurately evaluate and rapidly improve the quality of education pupils receive and their achievement by:
  - urgently improving the systems used to manage and monitor teaching and learning so that more teaching becomes good or better and underachievement is eradicated
  - collating and analysing information about pupils' attainment and progress more effectively so that any underachievement is quickly identified and addressed
  - improving teachers' understanding of pupils' performance data so that they identify the most important areas for improvement and use assessment information confidently to plan the next step in learning for individuals.
  
- Ensure that attendance improves further by carefully monitoring and promoting the attendance of all pupil groups.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 18-19 September 2012**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the governing body, groups of pupils, staff, local authority representatives and consultants.

### **Context**

A new headteacher and assistant headteacher took up their appointments at the beginning of September replacing the last headteacher who left in July. Two other teachers also left in July. Since the last inspection the school has recruited some additional governors.

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

Unvalidated assessment information shows that this year by the end of Year 6 the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in mathematics and English is average. The proportion gaining the higher Level 5 is above average. This is as a result of teaching and learning in lessons that is usually good, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

By the end of Year 2 attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has declined and targets were not met because progress was too slow. This is because too much teaching is either inadequate or requires improvement. Work is insufficiently challenging because teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan work that is pitched at the right level.

Assessment information checked by the local authority shows that children who entered Year 1 in September made the expected progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in most areas of learning. This was the result of a necessary change in the organisation of provision and a strengthening of the use of assessment information which paid better attention to the needs of the children. Despite this, they do not make the progress that they could because teaching is either inadequate or requires improvement.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make expected progress. The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language is more variable. Many of these pupils start and leave school outside of normal admission dates and the school has some difficulty judging how much progress they make.

## **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching in lessons at Key Stage 2, particularly in Years 5 and 6, is generally better than the rest of the school with the majority being good. Teachers use their knowledge of the pupils effectively to plan work that ensures that the quality of learning for most is good. However, the good practice that exists in the school is not shared effectively. Consequently, there are still a significant proportion of lessons in Years 3 and 4 where teaching requires improvement.

There is a minority of good teaching in Key Stage 1. However, this good practice is not shared so that other teachers can learn from it. In this Key stage, assessment information is not used effectively. Teachers use it to group pupils by ability, but then they do not use their knowledge of the pupils to make sure that each group has work that meets their needs. Consequently, there are pupils in each group who do not make the progress that they could because the work is either too hard or too easy. When in lessons, teachers do not pay close enough attention to the pupils when they work so that they miss opportunities to adapt the learning which would help them make better progress.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the reorganisation of provision has not got to the heart of the weaknesses in teaching and learning that need to be rectified. Staff do not pay close enough attention to the learning that might be expected when children embark on activities. Some children were observed drifting from activity to activity without engaging with them. In addition the teaching of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) varies in quality from inadequate to good. Where it is weak, children do not get sufficient opportunity to practise orally the sounds in words and insufficient attention is paid to whether children are making the progress they could or even if the work is pitched at the correct level for them.

The quality of guidance and marking is inconsistent. Much marking has very little impact as the advice is not precise enough to aid improvement. Moreover, the pupils have insufficient time to respond to it. However, there is some excellent practice in Years 3 and 6 that has not been shared. Pupils benefit from precise, systematic advice on the next steps they need to take to improve their work. Teachers also plan time when pupils can respond to this advice and consolidate their learning. In these classes pupils are involved in self and peer-assessment and demonstrate excellent and independent attitudes to learning.

Some teaching assistants demonstrate that they are very effective. However, where they are less effective it is because they have not been managed well by the teachers. When this occurs they do not know precisely what they should be trying to achieve when working with pupils. This sometimes leads to instructions which are over-directed and a complete reliance on the teaching assistant for the next steps in their learning. This, in turn, leads to pupils having little opportunity to use their own

initiative or to make decisions themselves. This is inadequate preparation for life outside school where they will have to have a measure of independence.

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

The attendance rate has improved markedly and is now average. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about the competitions and rewards for good attendance. As reported at the last inspection, pupils are polite and well-behaved around the school and in lessons. There are however, some minor concerns about behaviour and safety. One or two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were observed embarking on potentially unsafe behaviour within the very busy environment that was not identified by the staff. In one or two classes in the rest of the school, pupils resort to silly behaviour when not fully occupied, such as using scissors inappropriately. Pupils reported that a few pupils become involved in fights in the playground. They think that generally bullying is dealt with appropriately, but one pupil thoughtfully observed that occasionally teachers could respond more quickly to reports of bullying so that it did not get worse.

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

The headteacher is quickly gaining the support of the staff. She has worked effectively to raise morale. The new assistant headteacher is proving herself as an effective teacher. Both the headteacher and assistant headteacher have had insufficient time to have an impact on the provision and outcomes.

The reason why the school has made insufficient progress towards the removal of special measures is because other leaders have been ineffective. Their expectations of the quality of teaching and learning are too low. They demonstrate little initiative. Consequently, procedures to check pupil progress, the quality of teaching and learning and performance management are either too new to have had an impact or are non-existent. Currently, they are not demonstrating that they understand the steps they need to take to drive improvement where they are responsible.

The recently reviewed single improvement plan is unhelpful. It consists of a range of targets and activities that are insufficiently focused on the priorities for improvement. In addition the targets and activities do not appear to directly relate to the necessary impact on provision and outcomes. For example, the action to give pupils new targets when they have achieved the others has been reviewed as completed. However, observations of the school's work show that there is little evidence that this has actually occurred.

The recently strengthened governing body demonstrates a growing understanding of the role it must take. Governors demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the school. They are well aware that they need to pay great attention to the performance management of the relatively inexperienced

headteacher so that she is appropriately supported and challenged during this challenging time.

### **External support**

Ofsted judged the local authority's statement of action as fit for purpose prior to this monitoring inspection. Two teachers have improved their practice as a result of the coaching from a local authority consultant. The Early Years Foundation Stage has been better organised under the guidance of local authority consultants. The local authority has facilitated mentoring arrangements for the headteacher and a strengthening of the governing body. However, these arrangements have yet to have an impact. The local authority has not yet worked effectively with the governing body and headteacher to overcome the weaknesses in leadership that are the main barrier to future school improvement.