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Lynn Small
Littleton Green Community School
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WS12 4UD

Dear Mrs Small

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Littleton Green Community School

Following my visit to your school on 14–15 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 7–8 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

One newly qualified teacher 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 Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate pupils' progress and their attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - improving their oral skills in explaining what they are learning in lessons and how well they think they have done
 - increasing the application of calculation skills in all their mathematical work and in other subjects
 - reinforcing their comprehension skills in reading fiction and non-fiction texts.

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by January 2013 by:
 - strengthening teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics
 - extending pupils' prior knowledge and skills through challenging tasks that match the needs of all pupils and help accelerate their progress over time
 - eliminating unnecessary repetition of what pupils already know and can do
 - improving the deployment of teaching assistants so that they make a more effective contribution to pupils' learning and progress.

- Improve pupils' behaviour around the school by:
 - promoting respect for each other, all adults and the environment
 - teaching pupils how to make a positive contribution to the school's management of behaviour
 - reviewing the effectiveness of current strategies for managing pupils' behaviour.

- Bring rigour and accuracy to the school's self-evaluation by:
 - focusing on evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress during lesson observations and in the scrutiny of their written work
 - sharpening the monitoring and evaluation skills of leaders at all levels.

Special measures: monitoring of Littleton Green Community School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 14–15 November 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, looked closely at documents, and spoke to staff and pupils. He also met with governors, a representative from the local authority, and the headteacher of the partner school.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit two teachers have left and have been replaced. One of the new teachers has responsibility for literacy across the school. Seven new governors have joined, including a new Chair and Vice Chair. Pupils are now taught in ability groups in English and mathematics.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2012 unvalidated Year 6 national test results and Year 2 assessments indicate a small rise in attainment, particularly in Key Stage 2, but it remains below average. Improvement is stronger in mathematics than in English. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher National Curriculum levels was well below average in both key stages. Attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage was disappointing. However, since then there has been significant evidence of improvement as teachers are setting more demanding work, particularly in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and for more-able pupils.

Pupils are making much better progress in lessons as a result of the improvements made to teaching. The improvement is greatest in mathematics because teachers are more confident about teaching this subject and are giving pupils more opportunities to apply their mathematical thinking. Standards in lessons and the school's information about pupils' progress show that the improvement is most evident at Key Stage 2. Improvement elsewhere varies in line with the quality of teaching. The school has sensibly reorganised the Year 5 class so pupils are taught in two smaller groups.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making much faster progress, largely because of much better help and guidance from teaching assistants. The school has introduced a range of strategies to improve standards in reading. Pupils say they are reading a lot more, thanks to the teachers making comments much more frequently in reading records and easier access to the library.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection:

- accelerate pupils' progress and their attainment in English and mathematics – good.

The quality of teaching

More teaching is now good or better. Teachers' questions take more account of pupils' previous learning. Pupils are thinking more deeply about responses because they have more opportunities to discuss them with their classmates. For instance, Year 3 pupils really enjoyed discussing whether items were good value when sold in an alien's currency of 'Zounds'. In a few lessons teachers still rely on volunteers to answer questions, and other pupils sometimes lose their concentration.

Teachers now plan lessons more consistently, particularly in the way they share lesson aims with pupils. The work set for different ability groups is usually at the right level. A particularly effective strategy is the use of 'gap tests' so pupils can work on the aspects of mathematics they struggle with most. Year 6 pupils get the chance to teach each other, and this is helping to develop their communication skills. A growing proportion of teaching is outstanding. In some of the best lessons pupils were encouraged to choose the level of challenge. Some teachers are using competition very well. For instance, in a Year 1 lesson the teacher used a puppet to maintain pupils' interest in the letter sounds that were being blended, and in the work that followed one group learned very rapidly because they were competing with each other to identify the most sounds.

Teachers are using a wider range of resources in mathematics, and are planning more interesting mathematical investigations. For instance, pupils enjoyed working on the properties of shapes in their design and technology topic, 'Building a rocket'. The 'two stars and wish' feedback strategy is making pupils more aware of what they need to do to reach their targets. Pupils in some classes are now involved in assessing their own progress, although the success criteria are not always helpful. Parents appreciate that homework is now given to older pupils more regularly.

Information and communication technology is now used more to support and enhance learning, although pupils do not use it enough to present their work to others in the class. Teaching assistants are taking much greater responsibility. For instance, one in Year 3 led a review of learning at the end of the lesson.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn particularly well in teacher-led activities such as the short, sharp daily sessions on letters and sounds. However, in the reception classes they do not have enough opportunities to learn through activities they choose for themselves, especially outdoors. Parents say they now get more regular and detailed information, particularly about what is happening in the nursery.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection:

- raise the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by January 2013 – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school has successfully tackled all of the behaviour issues raised at the February inspection. It is now much better at teaching pupils a positive set of values. Older pupils really value their roles as 'peer mentors', and gave many of examples of how they had helped younger pupils. Inappropriate behaviour is well managed, particularly in lessons, so it rarely interferes with learning. The school has improved attendance. There is virtually no difference in the attendance levels of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium and other groups.

Pupils really value the rewards they receive, to the extent that some pupils and parents are a little concerned about how fairly these are allocated, particularly by lunchtime assistants. Despite this slight glitch behaviour continues to improve strongly as pupils are becoming much more engrossed in their learning.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection:

- improve pupils' behaviour around the school – good.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders are spreading the good practice that exists in teaching. They are more regularly and accurately assessing pupils' progress, and linking the results to lesson observations. Underperformance has been tackled and leaders are making sure that staff morale remains high. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to further improving teaching. The teachers who have joined since September have had a positive impact on the overall quality of teaching.

Performance targets for staff, including the headteacher, are now much more closely related to pupils' achievement. The governing body has a much greater awareness of how to hold senior leaders to account. It is setting much more challenging targets for the headteacher, and insisting that plans are amended so it can more easily check progress. The school has appropriate plans to use its recently increased pupil premium funding to improve achievement for eligible pupils, particularly in English.

Subject leaders are becoming more confident, particularly those responsible for English and mathematics. They have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good, particularly in Key Stage 1. Leaders are aware that the Early Years Foundation Stage environment is limiting pupils' experiences, particularly outside the classroom. The improvements made to subject leadership and governance are increasing the school's capacity to improve.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection:

- bring rigour and accuracy to the school's self-evaluation – good.

External support

The quality and impact of external support continue to be good. The partnership with another local school continues to be a strong source of support. The joint observations carried out across both schools have contributed to the quality of the school's monitoring. The mathematics course led by a local authority consultant has led to a marked improvement in the teaching of this subject. Local authority training for governors has helped them to hold leaders more effectively to account.