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Clare Fletcher
Headteacher
North Walsham Junior School
Manor Road
North Walsham
NR28 9HG

Dear Mrs Fletcher

Special measures monitoring inspection of North Walsham Junior School

Following my visit with Piers Ranger, Additional Inspector, to your school on 28–29 November 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 June 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 making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Up to two newly qualified teachers may be appointed in any area of the school. HMI should be notified if such appointments take place.

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 Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching and raise attainment in English and mathematics so that pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - setting high expectations for pupils' learning
 - using information about pupils' prior learning as a starting point for setting challenging targets
 - matching tasks to pupils' different abilities
 - informing pupils about how well they are progressing towards their targets and what they need to do to improve when their work is marked
 - ensuring pupils practise their literacy, numeracy and information technology skills across all subjects.

- Develop leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders regularly monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' achievements and use this information to enable staff to extend the learning of all pupils
 - there is greater rigour in the management of teachers' performance
 - the governing body works closely with school leaders in reviewing and evaluating the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 26–27 June 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met senior staff, a group of parents, pupils, and several governors. A telephone conversation took place with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors visited all 11 classes, and paid particular attention to pupils' workbooks in order to gauge progress since September.

Context

At the time of the last inspection, the headteacher was absent though in post. Subsequently, the school has formed a federation with the adjacent outstanding infants' school. The headteacher of the infants' school has taken responsibility for both schools, which now have a single governing body. Two teaching staff are new in post since the last inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the last inspection, the results of the 2012 Key Stage 2 tests have been made available. These show that pupils' attainment overall has improved and is now close to the national average. For mathematics, it remains below average. Pupils join the school with above-average attainment and, therefore, they do not make the progress that they should. This confirms the findings of the last inspection. The gap between the attainment of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and their peers is smaller than that seen nationally, as is the gap between boys and girls.

In the short time since September, the new headteacher has made significant changes to the curriculum and many other aspects of the school. Notably, commercially available and structured learning packages for reading, writing and mathematics have been introduced throughout the school. This means that teaching and learning, inadequate at the last inspection, have stabilised because they are better structured and paced than previously. Associated with this, the extent and frequency of catch-up sessions has been substantially increased. This is having a marked effect on those pupils who need it. Inspectors paid close attention to their work and noted an acceleration of the progress made by these and other pupils since September.

The quality of teaching

Teachers have undertaken significant training and updating since the last inspection. Teachers now teach material that is in line with age-related expectations, and this

was confirmed by classroom observations. This approach is beginning to accelerate pupils' progress in all year groups, and especially those who have fallen behind.

New systems to measure how well pupils are doing have been introduced. This is now done regularly and in all classes. Teachers' assessments are accurate. They are used well to inform parents and pupils about progress and what needs to be done to improve. Homework is regular and marking has improved. It is now regularly checked by senior leaders. Teachers have a good knowledge of how pupils are doing, but this information is not always used well in class. Often, the more-able pupils complete work early and are not stretched to achieve more. Target setting for individual pupils has been introduced throughout the school and most are able to state what they need to do to improve.

Leaders' lesson observations, together with many short lesson visits, are now used systematically to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. The school has used the system well to identify which areas of teachers' practice need to be improved. Much professional development has resulted, and the skills of teachers are improving as a result. In addition, teachers have observed each other's practice as well as lessons in the infants' school. However, lesson observations do not always concentrate on how effectively pupils are learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The last inspection report raised no issues relating to behaviour and safety so this aspect was not a focus of this first monitoring inspection.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new headteacher is a local leader of education. She often participates in the improvement of other schools and is now applying these skills to this school. As a result, she has laid a good foundation to begin the improvement of pupils' achievement.

Job roles and responsibilities have been clarified. A new management structure is being finalised. Targets for individuals, based around nationally recognised teaching standards, have been set and are being monitored. Accurate assessment and monitoring systems now mean that leaders have a clear view of how pupils, classes and year groups are progressing. This information is increasingly being used to set challenging targets that the school and individual teachers should meet, and to monitor the impact of teaching.

Governors are energetic in their promotion and work for the school. They understand the weaknesses that need to be tackled, and work closely with the headteacher to ensure that development and action plans are thorough, with clear success criteria and accountability. They question and challenge the headteacher

well, often asking searching questions. However, they are too dependent on information and analyses that the headteacher supplies for the monitoring of progress towards targets.

External support

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose. The authority is beginning to provide support in areas that the headteacher has identified. These include assessment, leadership, lesson observations, and training for governors in school performance data and its analysis.