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11 March 2013

Mr Steven Bowler  
Headteacher  
Plover Primary School  
Coniston Road  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
DN2 6JL

Dear Mr Bowler

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

Following my visit with Lynne Davies, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 March 2013, 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 fourth 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

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 Children and Young People's Service for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Martin Pye  
**Lead Inspector**

January 2013



## **Annex**

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

- Improve the attainment and progress pupils make in English by:
  - ensuring a common approach throughout the school to the teaching of handwriting and presentation of work
  - enabling pupils to produce quality written work in all subjects
  - building on the good habits of speaking and listening that pupils develop when in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that all lessons are at least good so that pupils make better progress and reach higher standards in all year groups by:
  - using available information about pupils' capabilities and previous progress in order to plan lessons that move at a good pace and keep pupils engaged
  - ensuring that teachers' marking is thorough and tells pupils how to improve
  - making sure that all pupils learn how to work independently and do not rely entirely on adult support.
- Ensure that all leaders adopt and develop the requisite skills so that they can provide a suitable system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision so that they can measure and demonstrate improvements in pupils' progress.
- Ensure that attendance improves in all year groups and that all pupils understand the importance of coming to school regularly.
- Ensure that the governing body takes a stronger role in promoting and planning community cohesion so that it is a common element throughout the school.

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

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 March 2013**

#### **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with staff and pupils. The inspectors observed 13 lessons, some of which were joint observations with a member of the school's leadership team. Meetings were held with senior staff, the Chair and vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, a permanent headteacher has taken up his post. The executive headteacher, seconded from another local school to lead Plover Primary through 2012, has steadily withdrawn her support but still has links with the school. One teacher has returned from maternity leave.

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

The school's tracking data show that a greater proportion of pupils are working at, or above, age-related expectations than was the case at the time of the last monitoring inspection. However, pupils' attainment in writing still lags some way behind the higher standards seen in reading and mathematics. The school is well aware of this and has taken steps to boost the performance of the group of pupils - which mainly includes boys - who are not making enough progress in writing. In Year 6, for example, hand-held tablet computers have been introduced as part of the school's efforts to enthuse and inspire reluctant writers. Across the school, there is now a weekly creative writing award which celebrates and rewards good quality writing. The school has set ambitious targets for attainment at the end of Year 6 and school leaders are confident that these targets will be met. There is no doubt that the school continues to make improvements in accelerating pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but there is some way to go if the end-of-year targets for writing are to be met.

The whole-school focus on improving handwriting and presentation is working. The pride that pupils take in their work, as was seen at the last monitoring inspection, is still clearly evident. Pupils' handwriting is neater and, in every class, pupils make an effort to produce careful work. The school is alert to these improvements and eye-catching wall displays of pupils' best writing demonstrate the high value that continues to be placed on the presentation of pupils' writing.

Work in pupils' books shows improvement over time and that pupils are writing in purposeful ways in different subjects. Pupils are increasingly able to talk about the guidance and encouragement they have received, and the techniques they have used, in order to improve the quality of their work. In Key Stage 2, for example, older pupils have used

editing software on a word processing program to track the ways that they have found to redraft their writing. This simple, but effective, approach helps them to see how the changes they have made have improved their writing.

Speaking and listening opportunities are now included in most lessons. Teachers question pupils in ways that prompt them to discuss and explain their thinking and the reasons behind the decisions they have made. Nevertheless, while staff are now giving pupils plenty of chance to talk through their ideas, teachers do not always listen carefully enough to what pupils are saying. Consequently, their teaching is not adjusted in response to the explanations given by pupils. This means that, at times, some misunderstandings are missed or pupils who already understand are not pushed on quickly enough.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the attainment and progress pupils make in English – satisfactory

### **The quality of teaching**

There is now more good teaching at the school than there was at the time of the last monitoring inspection and some teaching is outstanding. While the proportion of teaching that is less than good has decreased, there is still some teaching that requires improvement.

Teachers are now in the habit of using information about pupils' current level of understanding in order to plan lessons that are pitched at the right level. Some lessons start with exciting activities that grab pupils' attention, set a good pace and make pupils keen to learn more. Whether they are being given mysterious objects to feel and describe, opening an unexpected letter, or searching the classroom to find words written on post-it notes, pupils respond well to these imaginative and simple devices to get them interested and engaged in learning.

While the school has been successful in ensuring a consistent approach to lesson planning, plans are not always sharply focused on what different groups of pupils will learn in a lesson. This is an area where more work could be done.

The quality of marking continues to be stronger in English than it is in mathematics. This is because teachers' marking of written work provides pupils with feedback about strengths in their writing and guidance about how to improve it. Marking in mathematics, which was identified as a priority for improvement during the recent local authority review, is not as helpful.

Most pupils can talk about the targets they are working towards. They regularly check their own and others' work and teachers provide many prompt sheets to support them with this. Older pupils understand how well they are doing at school and can explain what they need to do next in order to make further progress.

Because teaching has improved and lessons are now more purposeful, pupils are more eager to use their initiative. In the best lessons, pupils make decisions, work collaboratively, and have to use a wide range of skills to complete tasks or solve problems. In a very effective English lesson, for example, pupils had to work with others to 'up-level' their written work before checking it against success criteria which they had helped to set. Throughout the lesson, the teacher listened carefully to pupils' responses and then skilfully guided their thinking and learning further by prompting them with well-timed questions.

When teaching is less effective, the more-able pupils do not push on as quickly as they could because they have too many routine or introductory tasks to get through first. At other times, teachers give too many instructions that limit pupils' decision making and make it harder for staff to check pupils' current levels of understanding. Occasionally, teachers overlook the use of simple resources, such as number lines or vocabulary lists, which would support pupils in developing greater independence in their work.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that all lessons are at least good so that pupils make better progress and reach higher standards in all year groups – satisfactory

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Since the last monitoring inspection, the overall attendance figure has dipped and, for the academic year to date, is below average and is lower than it was at this time last year. There has been some unavoidable absence due to illness, but a small group of pupils continue to miss too much school for no valid reason and this is hindering their progress.

The school now sends text messages to parents when their child's attendance drops below 95% and offers rewards for good and improved attendance. Recently, the school entered into a partnership with a local business to provide a financial incentive to families whose children maintain high attendance. Following the previous monitoring inspection, the governors amended the school's policy towards holidays in term time so that, in most cases, requests for holiday absence will be refused. These actions are meeting with some success. The number of pupils with full attendance has increased from eight pupils in 2010/11, to 23 pupils in 2011/12 and to 28 pupils in the current academic year so far.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school continues to be generally good and disruption to learning due to poor behaviour is rare. Bullying is not reported to be a problem and pupils say that they feel safe in school.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that attendance improves in all year groups and that all pupils understand the importance of coming to school regularly – satisfactory

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

There is no doubt that the leadership and management of the school have been strengthened. A permanent headteacher took up his post in January 2013 and the handover from the executive headteacher has been managed smoothly. Staff roles and responsibilities have been redefined so that there is a better match between job descriptions and teachers' position on the pay scale.

A partnership between Plover Primary and other local schools, which was started under the leadership of the executive headteacher, continues to develop. The lead teacher programme, where the most effective teachers within this cluster of schools take on a leadership role for the training and development of staff in several schools, is currently at an early stage of development but is indicative of the way the school now looks beyond its own walls in order to share good practice and learn from others.

School leaders regularly monitor the quality of work in pupils' books. They know how much progress the pupils are making and use this information to check that teachers are planning lessons at the right level. They regularly observe teachers at work in order to offer guidance and support, and to check aspects of classroom practice. However, the role of leaders, other than the headteacher, in checking the general quality of teaching is not as well developed as it could be.

Governors are much better informed about all aspects of the school's work than they used to be. They are alert to the school's successes to date, but are well aware of the work still to be done. Progress in promoting and planning community cohesion is a regular item for discussion and review at governors' meetings and it is clear that the pupils are being taught about local matters and the world around them. Support for pupils who speak English as an additional language has improved and a key leader at the school is currently undertaking training to support this area of the school's work. The weekly International Club, which provides after-school practical activities that help pupils to learn about the wider world, continues to be well attended. Plans to establish links with schools in other parts of Britain or in other countries have been put on hold while the school deals with the more urgent matter of raising academic standards.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that all leaders adopt and develop the requisite skills so that they can provide a suitable system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision so that they can measure and demonstrate improvements in pupils' progress – good
- Ensure that the governing body takes a stronger role in promoting and planning community cohesion so that it is a common element throughout the school – satisfactory

## External support

The support from the local authority continues to be appropriate for the school's current needs. The recent local authority review, carried out in February 2013, recognises the progress that the school has made and makes well-informed recommendations about action to drive forward further improvements.