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Mrs Lizzie Blount
Headteacher
Croft Primary School
Station Road
Sutton-in-Ashfield
NG17 5FJ

Dear Mrs Blount

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Croft Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11–12 June 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 are 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.

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 of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress through the school, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that the teaching is consistently good, based on:
 - using information about the levels at which pupils are working to provide activities that match closely to their abilities and provide a good level of challenge
 - setting targets in literacy and numeracy which are known and understood by pupils and of which they have ownership
 - marking that informs pupils regularly of their achievements and the next steps in their learning.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school and provide support for the headteacher in her drive to raise attainment levels, by making sure that:
 - senior leaders have roles, responsibilities and accountability for moving the school forward in key aspects of school improvement, including the quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment
 - middle leaders have greater impact on improving the outcomes in subjects for which they are responsible
 - the governing body monitors and evaluates the school's performance comprehensively so that it can challenge the school and influence its direction.

Special measures: monitoring of Croft Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 11–12 June 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, looked carefully at school documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, a group of pupils, representatives from the governing body, and the local authority education improvement adviser. The inspector visited ten classes to observe teaching and learning.

Context

Since the previous visit, the deputy headteacher has resigned. Two senior leaders are currently acting as assistant headteachers to cover this post until a permanent appointment is made.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the previous monitoring visit, the quality of pupils' learning has continued to improve and, as a result, is making a positive contribution to improving rates of progress and raising attainment. The rate of progress made by pupils across the school in English and mathematics is accelerating and, in some years, is good. This improved progress includes pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding allocated to support those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils who are in local authority care). For example, the school's most recent data shows that, in all year groups, pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium are making accelerated progress in mathematics.

A greater proportion of pupils across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are making the progress they should, but few are making better than expected progress. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in English and mathematics is rising and is closing the gap with national expectations. At the current rate of improvement, the school is on course to meet the government's floor standards for Year 6, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

Pupils' work in their books since March 2012 shows an improvement in the quality and quantity. For example, in Years 5, pupils' writing books show that their punctuation and spelling skills have been consolidated and mathematics books show that pupils are calculating with greater accuracy. The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics), and the effective use of 'Better Words' and 'Switch On Reading' interventions, are helping pupils to develop their spelling and reading skills well because they are provided with a range of work well matched to their needs. Pupils say that mathematics is now one of their favourite subjects and they particularly enjoy mathematical investigations.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has continued to improve since the previous monitoring visit. Most of the teaching observed during this visit was good or better, with the remainder requiring improvement but getting closer to good. In the best lessons observed, teachers planned lessons which were matched accurately to the needs of most pupils and presented them with appropriate challenge. Pupils enjoyed using a range of resources which engaged them in a practical way, and enjoyed many opportunities to work in pairs and groups. In the small number of lessons that required improvement, teachers spent too much time talking to pupils, their questioning did not extend pupils' thinking adequately, and some more-able pupils were not given appropriately challenging work.

Teaching is outstanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because incisive assessment is used effectively to plan targeted activities that build on children's prior learning. Children thoroughly enjoy learning and playing together as they extend their thinking and knowledge through a wide range of exciting and stimulating experiences.

Most teachers are marking pupils' work to a high standard. They are providing comments which help pupils to take the next steps in their learning. Target setting is well established and all pupils know their targets and work enthusiastically towards achieving them in lessons.

The role of teaching assistants is well developed. For example, teaching assistants support pupils with increased confidence, and frequently use their initiative well to judge when, and how, to support individual pupils, including those with additional needs. All teaching assistants are involved in delivering a range of intervention programmes, which are monitored rigorously to ensure that pupils' needs are being precisely met. These carefully planned interventions, combined with improving teaching, are beginning to close the gaps in attainment between different groups of pupils and raise pupils' achievement.

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

- raise attainment and accelerate progress through the school, especially in mathematics, by ensuring that the teaching is consistently good – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and relationships continue to be good. Increasingly, teachers are becoming skilful in guiding pupils' thoughts and energies into exciting learning. As a result, pupils' behaviour, attention and focus in lessons are improving well. Pupils are courteous and polite. They behave well in all areas of the school, including the dining room and on the playground. Pupils continue to report that they feel safe in school, and enjoy good friendships with no fear of intimidating behaviour.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The headteacher is providing strong leadership. She demonstrates an unswerving determination to improve the school. This is underpinned by a good understanding of the school's emerging strengths, as well as the weaknesses which still need to be addressed. She is ensuring that all staff receive clear guidance on how to improve the quality of their teaching and that detailed information about pupils' progress is shared regularly with staff. This is a contributory factor to the good improvements to the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

The two temporary assistant headteachers have swiftly got to grips with their new roles and are making a positive contribution to driving the school forward. They are effective as senior leaders because they clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, and demonstrate that they are good teachers in their own right.

Other leaders continue to work hard and are developing effective leadership skills. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas. They are able to identify and judge how much progress different groups of pupils are making and the impact of teaching on that progress. There is less reliance upon support from the local authority and partner school as senior leaders take more responsibility for themselves. This demonstrates that the school's capacity to improve is getting stronger.

The governing body is growing in strength. Minutes of governing body meetings indicate that governors are regularly checking the school's progress against the action plan and asking challenging questions to hold the school to account. The first governor newsletter to parents is ready for distribution. Safeguarding documents were checked during the monitoring visit and continue to meet requirements.

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

- strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management across the school and provide support for the headteacher in her drive to raise attainment levels – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school. All staff have benefitted from working with the Local Leader in Education and other teachers from the partner school. The Local Leader in Education has recently supported the school in the interview process to recruit new staff for September. Both the local authority and the Local Leader in Education rightly recognise that the leadership of the school is becoming stronger and, as a result, requires less direct support.