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Mr Lee Venning
Headteacher
Heatherbrook Primary School
Astill Lodge Road
Beaumont Leys
Leicester
LE4 1BE

Dear Mr Venning

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Heatherbrook Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in September 2012. 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Ensure that teaching is at least good by:
 - making sure that teachers and other adults consistently apply agreed behaviour management procedures in lessons and by making their expectations for behaviour clear to pupils
 - extending the good-quality marking seen in literacy and numeracy to other subjects
 - making sure that the tasks set in lessons match the needs of individuals and groups in order to accelerate learning for all pupils
 - providing teachers with opportunities to observe good and outstanding practice, including that already present in the school.

- Improve pupils' progress across the school to at least the nationally expected rate so that standards at the end of Year 6 improve by:
 - extending opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum
 - involving pupils routinely in the assessment of their own and others' work
 - ensuring that pupils improve the presentation of their work.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - using appropriate and rigorous criteria to judge the quality of teaching and learning and by providing clear feedback to teachers about how they can improve
 - involving new subject leaders in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and in the strategic planning for improvement.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1 July 2013

Evidence

The inspection focused on how well leaders are addressing all of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last full inspection. During this inspection, the inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the school's improvement plans, minutes from governing body meetings, data on pupils' progress, leaders' records of teachers' performance, and the school's single central record of staff suitability checks. Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, the principal educational psychologist, and a representative of the local authority. Informal conversations took place with parents and carers on the playground. The inspector observed teaching in three lessons, taught by three teachers. All of these were held jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also visited other lessons for short periods of time to check work in pupils' books and observe pupils' behaviour.

Context

There have been no significant changes in staffing, and no changes to the school's status, since the time of the last inspection.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders are working effectively to improve the school. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and pupils are starting to make better progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematics skills.

Senior leaders judge the quality of teaching accurately and provide clear feedback to teachers about how they can improve. Leaders make sure that teachers have acted upon the feedback they have been given by making frequent checks on their work. This is playing a key role in improving the quality of teaching.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics are becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. For example, they have carried out checks of pupils' workbooks and have spent time checking the consistency of the quality of teaching in each class. Senior leaders, with support from the local authority, have effectively trained subject leaders to analyse data about pupils' progress. However, subject leaders have not been given enough time by senior leaders to put these skills into practice, to enable them to gain a deeper understanding, and a more detailed overview, of pupils' performance in their subjects across the school. This means that they are not yet able to make a strong impact on the strategic planning for school improvement.

Senior leaders have embraced opportunities to work in partnership with other schools, both within and beyond the local authority. These partnerships have

enabled senior leaders to share their ideas and also to identify new methods and approaches to help the school to improve. For example, a link brokered by HMI with a school in Derby has led to improvements in the quality of teaching, and has improved the effectiveness of the school's systems to manage pupils' behaviour.

The governing body is becoming more effective in holding leaders to account for improving the school. For example, governors have invited subject leaders to governing body meetings to ask challenging questions of them, and have been involved in working with teachers to check work in pupils' books. Governors now focus more carefully on the impact that leaders' actions are making on improving pupils' achievement. As a result, governance is becoming increasingly effective in driving improvement at the school.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Different groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are making better progress than they did previously because the quality of teaching is improving. The latest unconfirmed results for pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2013 show that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is rising and that their progress is accelerating. Pupils in most other year groups are also making better progress.
- Improved and more consistent systems are in place to manage pupils' behaviour in lessons. As a result, pupils' behaviour is getting better and there are fewer interruptions to pupils' learning in lessons.
- The quality of teachers' marking in different subjects is improving. Teachers give pupils useful feedback about how they can improve their work, and the next steps of learning they need to take.
- Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled and effective in ensuring that tasks in lessons match the needs of different pupils. For example, teachers check pupils' work in lessons more frequently, to enable them to recognise more quickly when tasks are too easy or too hard for pupils.
- Work in pupils' books and topic folders indicates that they are given more frequent opportunities to write at length to practise their writing skills. They are also given more frequent opportunities to assess their own and others' work. As a result, they are becoming increasingly engaged in learning and are becoming more aware of the progress they are making.
- The large majority of parents and carers who spoke with the inspector during the monitoring visit are pleased with how well the school is improving.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Pupils in a small minority of classes do not make progress in line with national expectations because the quality of teaching in these classes is not good enough.

- Teachers in the school, other than the senior leaders, do not have enough opportunities to observe each other teach, so that they can share their ideas and improve the quality and consistency of their practice.
- On some occasions, the pace of learning slows down too much for pupils in lessons, because teachers keep the whole class together for too long at the start of lessons. This means that some pupils, often those who are more able, have to listen to the teacher explaining things that they already understand.
- There are too many inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' handwriting and in the presentation of their work. The school does not have an agreed policy on the presentation of pupils' work. Consequently, pupils' work is too often untidy and poorly presented.

External support

The local authority has supported the school well since the last inspection. For example, senior and middle leaders have received effective training to improve the quality of their observations of teaching, and to improve the ways in which they check work in pupils' books. This has improved the quality of leadership and management. Partnerships, brokered by the local authority with other local schools recognised for their good and sometimes outstanding practice, have played important roles in helping the school to improve the quality of teaching. The local authority's behaviour support team and the educational psychology service have played key roles in helping the school to improve its strategies to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.