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3 December 2013

Miss Kate Westwood  
Acting Headteacher  
Heatherbrook Primary School  
Astill Lodge Road  
Beaumont Leys  
Leicester  
LE4 1BE

Dear Miss Westwood

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Heatherbrook Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 December 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 third 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 not making enough 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 third monitoring inspection on 3 December 2013**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, the inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the school's data on pupils' progress, leaders' records of teachers' performance, minutes from governing body meetings, and the school's single central record of staff suitability checks. Meetings were held with senior leaders including the acting headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. Informal conversations took place with parents and carers on the playground as they brought their children to school. The inspector observed teaching in three lessons, all in Key Stage 2 classes, taught by three teachers. All of these were visited jointly with the acting headteacher. The inspector also visited other lessons for short periods of time to observe learning, and check work in pupils' books.

The inspection focused on how well leaders are addressing all of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last full inspection.

### **Context**

The headteacher is currently absent from school with illness, and has been absent since the beginning of November 2013. The school is being led by the deputy headteacher in his absence. She is receiving additional support from the local authority and also from an external adviser. Since the last inspection, one teacher has returned from maternity leave.

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

The rate at which the school is improving has slowed significantly since the last monitoring visit in July 2013. This is due to turbulence in leadership and because very few effective actions were taken by senior leaders between July 2013 and the end of October 2013 to address the school's key priorities. This had a negative impact on staff morale and there is evidence that this also linked to a decline in the standards of pupils' behaviour during this period.

In recent weeks, the acting headteacher has made a strong start and staff report that they have received clear direction. This has helped to re-energise staff, raise morale, and generate a sense of purpose. A number of key actions have also been taken recently, driven by the acting headteacher. These have included a revision of the school's self-evaluation document and the implementation of a new, and improved, system to track the progress that pupils are making in their learning.

Pupils' behaviour deteriorated between July 2013 and the end of October 2013, because systems to manage pupils' behaviour became inconsistent. Leaders have failed to agree a behaviour policy to promote consistent behaviour management.

However, parents and carers, and staff, report that there has been a positive atmosphere in the school in recent weeks and an improvement in pupils' behaviour. Pupils were observed behaving well during the monitoring visit in different areas of the school, and no lessons were interrupted through pupils exhibiting disruptive behaviour. The acting headteacher has arranged for a training session to support staff in writing a behaviour policy. This will take place early in the Spring term 2014. The training will be supported by the local authority's behaviour support team and an educational psychologist.

Senior leaders have not made enough impact on improving the quality of teaching. Leaders have observed the work of each teacher and have tried to identify how each teacher can improve. Most teachers have been given targets to work towards to help them to teach more effectively. This has made some impact on improving the quality of teaching. However, too many of the targets for teachers are not clear enough, and teachers do not understand them. Consequently, the quality of their teaching has not improved quickly enough. As a result, and, when combined with a period of deterioration in pupils' behaviour, pupils' progress has not accelerated quickly enough.

The governing body is managing a challenging period of turbulence in the school's senior leadership effectively. Governors have accurately identified that the school's rate of improvement since the last monitoring visit has not been as strong as it should be, and have challenged leaders to improve. The Chair of the Governing Body worked effectively and rapidly with the local authority to secure arrangements for the leadership of the school during the headteacher's absence. The governing body continues to strengthen, for example through the appointment of a practising secondary school teacher to improve the arrangements to prepare pupils for the transition to secondary school at the end of Year 6. The school's checks on the suitability of staff fully meet requirements.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Through the recent introduction of a more effective system to track pupils' progress, leaders have accurately identified that several groups of pupils in Years 5 and 6, have fallen behind in developing reading and writing skills. Leaders are in the process of planning a comprehensive range of support in the Spring term 2014 to help them to catch up.
- The quality and accuracy of leaders' work to evaluate the effectiveness of the school have improved. Leaders are now focusing more closely on the progress that individuals and different groups of pupils are making.
- Pupils are frequently involved in assessing their own and others' work. They are also given more frequent opportunities to discuss their ideas with each other in lessons. This is helping to engage pupils more effectively in learning and improve their speaking and listening skills. Pupils are also being given more frequent opportunities to practise their writing skills in different subjects.

## **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- The school's data show that pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 have not made enough progress in developing reading and writing skills, and standards are well below those expected for their age. This is because teaching has not been effective enough to meet their needs. Similar weaknesses in calculation skills and awareness of number facts such as multiplication facts are not being tackled well enough.
- Leaders have not yet fully updated the school's improvement plan to fully reflect its priorities. The acting headteacher has agreed to complete this, and submit it to HMI, by the end of December 2013.
- Not enough is being done to raise pupils' aspirations to improve the quality of their writing. For example, the school's displays are not effective enough in showcasing and celebrating examples of pupils' high quality writing. Although the presentation of pupils' work is improving overall, teachers' expectations of the standards of pupils' handwriting are still not high enough.
- The quality of teachers' marking in subjects other than English and mathematics is still not good enough. Pupils do not receive enough guidance to help them to improve the quality of their work.
- Teachers make sure that they plan lessons to match the abilities of individuals and different groups of pupils. However, they rarely deviate from their plans during lessons. This means that on the occasions when pupils find the tasks set for them too easy or too hard, teachers fail to adapt the tasks to meet their needs. This slows the progress they make in their learning.
- Teachers still do not have enough opportunities to observe good quality teaching in other classes to help them to improve their own skills.

## **External support**

The local authority continues to support the school effectively during a period of significant turbulence in its leadership. A partnership with an external consultant, arranged by the local authority, and visits from a local authority school improvement adviser have ensured that the acting headteacher has received the necessary support to enable her to make a strong start. For example, the external consultant helped the acting headteacher to improve the quality of the school's self-evaluation, and the local authority adviser helped the acting headteacher to improve the quality of the system to track pupils' progress. The local authority accepts that the school has not made enough progress since the last monitoring visit, but through providing increased and well-targeted support it has played a key role in halting the school's decline.