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Emma McGrenaghan
Headteacher
Lynncroft Primary and Nursery School
Lynncroft, Eastwood
Nottingham, NG16 3FZ

Dear Mrs McGrenaghan

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lynncroft Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit with Aileen King, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24–25 March 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 9 October 2013. 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.

The school may appoint no more than one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection. If appointed, the teacher must only be deployed to teach in the Early Years Foundation Stage or Year 1.

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 Nottinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, so that pupils make at least the progress expected nationally, and an increasing proportion make more progress than expected nationally, in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teachers assess pupils' progress accurately so that lessons build, at a more rapid pace, on what pupils know and are able to do
 - rigorously checking that pupils have the mathematical skills and understanding that they need for tackling the problems they are set
 - ensuring that teachers accurately teach pupils the sounds that letters make (phonics), and develop their wider reading skills
 - establishing high expectations, and making sure that pupils respond to them so that they are fully engaged in learning and are encouraged to persevere
 - injecting greater urgency and excitement into lessons and better organising how groups of pupils are taught
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are used to full effect throughout lessons
 - making sure that pupils' work is always marked in a way that highlights how it can be improved, and that pupils are given time to respond to their teachers' comments and to improve their work
 - providing more frequent and interesting opportunities for pupils to write in a range of subjects
 - teaching pupils a fluent style of handwriting and expecting them to present their work neatly in all subjects
 - stimulating pupils' interest in reading and writing by giving books, and their authors, a high profile in classrooms and corridors.

- Improve leadership and management and increase the capacity of all leaders to bring about rapid improvement by:
 - providing further training to develop the subject leaders' knowledge and skills in order to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy
 - making full and effective use of pupil premium funding, and rigorously checking that it is having a substantial impact on pupils' progress
 - developing a programme of professional development for teaching assistants so that they can play a full part in accelerating pupils' progress
 - reviewing the curriculum and ensuring that, for example, the teaching of writing and calculation are well matched to the needs of all groups of pupils
 - making sure that pupils' attainment and progress are accurately assessed so that leaders can make secure judgements about where to target additional support, and allowing them to evaluate accurately the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress
 - updating the school website so that it meets current requirements.

- Undertake an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 24–25 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders and staff who have management responsibilities. Her Majesty's Inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the Chair, and with the school's Education Improvement Adviser.

The inspectors visited all classes and some observations of lessons were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and Her Majesty's Inspector met with a group of pupils to discuss their reading, writing and mathematics work. Improvement plans and the impact of leaders' actions were checked, along with assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. The single central record was checked to ensure that new staff have been added and that the school complies with statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding and staff vetting procedures.

Context

A new deputy headteacher has been appointed and joined the school in January 2014. Another deputy headteacher from the partner primary school, a good school, is teaching a class and supporting other teachers until July. Two temporary class teachers are covering for permanent teachers who are on family leave.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Although pupils' attainment remains below average in reading, writing and mathematics, it is improving because the quality of teaching is getting better. The large majority of pupils are making more progress now than was previously reported at the time that the school was placed in special measures in October 2013. Current assessments of the progress and performance of Year 6 pupils indicate that the school is very likely to meet the government's floor standards (the minimum national standards expected for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6). Nevertheless, there is still more to be done to ensure that all pupils achieve as well they should because there is still some teaching that requires improvement or that is inadequate.

The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well. It is encouraging to report that this remains a relative strength of the school. As a result, the children get off to a good start and are improving their early language and communication skills. In both the Nursery class and Reception Year, children are learning to read and write with increasing confidence and fluency. This is also reflected in the most recent national phonic screening checks as pupils in Year 1 reached standards that compared favourably with the national average (the phonic screening check is a

national assessment that gauges how well children learn letter sounds and spellings).

Pupils that are eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding which, in this school, is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority) achieve at similar rates to other pupils.

In writing, pupils are improving the quality and consistency of their handwriting but many still make repeated spelling errors or leave out important punctuation, such as commas or full stops. Pupils in Year 6 are making good rates of progress in both reading and writing because of good teaching and much sharper assessments of their progress and performance. Across the school, pupils' progress in reading is much better compared with that seen in writing and mathematics, although pupils in Year 5 still have a lot of ground to catch up as a result of the previous legacy of poor teaching and achievement.

Where the quality of teaching is consistently good, pupils make good progress in both reading and writing because teachers and support staff are much more vigilant and they help pupils to correct their work while they write or hear them read aloud during the lesson. However, there are still lessons where teachers and teaching assistants are not checking pupils' writing regularly enough to make sure that any progress pupils make towards reaching age-related levels is sustained over time.

In mathematics, standards are also rising, but again this is patchy because some of the work pupils do is not set at the right level of difficulty, particularly for the most able pupils. Teachers are increasingly providing more problem-solving tasks for pupils to tackle, and pupils are getting more opportunities to use calculation skills. However, in some lessons observed during the inspection, pupils were using clumsy or inefficient methods to work out straightforward addition, subtraction or multiplication problems.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are provided with a range of support which includes one-to-one intervention work with a teaching assistant or additional classroom support in a group with their classmates. Assessment show that the progress these pupils make remains patchy and depends very much on the quality of teaching. Like other pupils, however, an increasing number of pupils who have special educational needs are on course to reach age-related levels in reading but make slower progress in writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

An increasing proportion of the teaching is of good quality, although too much still requires improvement and some of the teaching is inadequate. The newly appointed deputy headteacher and the deputy headteacher from the partner primary school

are contributing to improving teachers' performance and are providing support, guidance and challenge to other teachers.

An increase in the amount of good teaching is raising standards and there are some significant developments that contribute to this trend of improvement. Firstly, teachers are now using the school's assessments of pupils' progress and performance more consistently and accurately to plan work that meets the needs of pupils of different abilities. This has led to significant improvements to the quality of teachers' planning. For example, lesson plans include specific details about pupils' expected learning targets; the tasks set out in the plans are usually divided into three sections that match three broad ability ranges; and pupils are increasingly being given work that matches abilities. Nevertheless, in lessons where the teaching requires improvement or is inadequate, teachers and teaching assistants do not extend or move pupils' learning on to help them reach higher levels. This is more typically the case for the most able pupils and is more often a feature of mathematics lessons.

Where teaching is less effective, more-able pupils are spending too much time going over old ground and are not always being taught the necessary skills or acquiring sufficient knowledge to help them try more complex tasks. For example, in one lesson pupils in Key Stage 2 were attempting to work out equivalent fractions, they were not taught the specific techniques at the beginning to help them match fractions of equal values. The most effective teaching is more instructional and helpful to pupils, as was observed in Year 4, as pupils were given the necessary instructions and resources to help them judge how big or small different angles are when rotating lines around a fixed point.

Good teaching and much-improved marking provides pupils with sufficient information or instructions to see the next steps in their learning. Pupils are clear about what they have to do and understand what is needed next to reach higher levels. Teachers' marking has improved significantly across the school and pupils are now responding much better to this. When work is completed, pupils are now having more time to correct errors when editing or improving their writing, and they are encouraged to go over mistakes in mathematics by showing how they have worked out a particular problem. One pupil told Her Majesty's Inspector that, 'We are very clear about our teacher's marking now because we have been taught to answer questions when the teacher makes a comment.' Another pupil added that, 'It's a bit like a question and answer task – the teacher asks us a question, and we reply.'

Where the teaching requires improvement or is inadequate, the tasks set are disjointed and do not necessarily improve pupils' learning. Where this is the case, pupils are unclear about what comes next and both teachers and teaching assistants are not always checking to see what pupils understand, or more importantly, what they do not understand. Weak teaching like this, however, is being managed and improved by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and there is demonstrable

evidence of improvement in response to this increased level of support and scrutiny in all classes. In Year 2, for example, the teaching of mathematics is good and pupils are now expected to do much better than they did last year. This has come about because of the support, guidance and intervention of senior leaders and the positive response of teachers and teaching assistants to this support and mentoring.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils talk with more confidence and enthusiasm about their work, reading choices and independent writing. They are keen to do well and are usually well behaved and attentive in lessons and at other times around the school. The only lapses of concentration occur when teachers or teaching assistants do not expect enough of pupils or repeat what has already been learned. Pupils told inspectors that they like coming to school and they have noticed that, as one pupil put it, 'I am working harder now and doing much more work than before.' This pupil is correct, as workbooks show improvements to the quality and quantity of work being covered.

The improvements to pupils' behaviour and learning, as well as the increased engagement with pupils through improved marking, have raised expectations. There is an energy and enthusiasm for learning in most lessons, and pupils are much more involved and interested in their work. Workbooks are well presented and demonstrate that pupils are proud of their efforts and try hard to do their best. Pupils also appreciate the fact that adults value their contributions and are rewarded when they do well. They are encouraged by the most effective and vigilant staff to try even harder. When the teaching is less effective or demands less of the pupils, they understandably lose interest or their attention wanders so they do less work. On the whole, however, pupils are doing more, achieving better and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are improving.

Although pupils like coming to school, attendance rates are below average. This is despite the school's efforts to encourage some parents to avoid taking their children on holiday during term-time.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher is resilient and determined. Since joining the school shortly before the inspection that placed it in special measures, she has had to manage many complex and demanding staffing issues. In addition, the large majority of teaching at that time was inadequate and very little was of good or better quality. To her credit, the headteacher has managed to cope with these demands and, at the same time, increase the level of scrutiny and challenge so that more is being expected of everyone throughout the school community. This determination and ambition is bearing fruit, as more teaching is now of good quality and less requires improvement or is inadequate. The support provided for teachers and teaching assistants, and the challenges presented to staff when judging their performance, are improving the

way teachers plan their lessons. There is still a lot more that needs to be done, however, in order to maintain the current momentum of improvement and there is still staffing instability, as some teachers may return after family leave.

The recent appointment of an effective and experienced deputy headteacher has already strengthened the teaching and, together with a productive collaboration with a good primary school, leaders and governors are starting to secure a platform for more sustained improvement to teaching. There are now four effective teachers leading improvement across each phase of the school: the headteacher, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, the school's deputy headteacher, and the seconded deputy headteacher from the partner school. The combined efforts of this team provide a firm foundation from which to monitor and support teaching in every class.

The school development plan provides a clear route map for more sustained improvement. There are challenging targets in the development plan for teachers and support staff to aim for. With the broader range of methods of checking performance, such as book reviews, learning walks and drop-in visits to lessons undertaken by senior leaders, teachers are now more accountable and are much clearer about what outcomes to expect from each lesson to ensure that pupils achieve well and maintain good rates of progress.

Governors are undertaking further training on assessment to help them gauge the impact of teaching on the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium. They are increasingly gathering first-hand evidence in order to hold the school's leaders more fully to account. Additional governors have been appointed. This has brought added expertise. The governing body has already acted on the most recent external review of governance to undertake a skills audit so that each governor is linked to a core priority for improvement. Nevertheless, governors have yet to formalise procedures that will ensure that they can measure the impact of the school's actions using the targets set out in the local authority's action plan and the school's development plan. There is still more work to be done in this respect to ensure that the governing body provides the necessary challenge to the school's leaders that will sustain the current rate of progress.

External support

The local authority's Education Improvement Adviser has recently carried out an accurate review of the school's progress which provides the school's leaders with a focus for sustained improvement to teaching and pupils' achievement. The local authority is providing the right balance of support and challenge for the school's leaders and governors. The support provided by the partner headteacher has been effective and has the potential to provide more opportunities for teachers and support staff to see and share good practice with another school. In order to maintain the current momentum of improvement, especially to teaching, it is crucial at this stage that the school's leaders and governors do not get distracted and can

work in partnership with local authority services to resolve any remaining staffing and resourcing issues.