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Mrs Andrea Charman
Headteacher
Lydd Primary School
20 Skinner Road
Lydd
Romney Marsh
TN29 9HN

Dear Mrs Charman

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lydd Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 April 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative from the local authority. I toured the school and visited every classroom. I evaluated the local authority's statement of action, together with the school's action plan and a range of documentation, including the governing body minutes.

Context

A new part-time teacher has joined the Reception class to cover an absence. The other, longstanding Reception teacher is leaving the school at the end of the term.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The local authority statement of action and the school's action plan share the same weaknesses. They do not reflect accurately the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report and include actions which are too limited, with timescales which are too broad. There is not enough planning for staff training. The actions intended to improve teaching are confused.

Neither of these documents provides a logical and practical approach to the improvement which is required in the school. As a result, they will not support rapid improvement, or enable governors to check and measure the school's progress. The aspirational target in the local authority statement of action for removal from special measures by December 2014 is therefore unrealistic.

You have taken some action connected with the areas for improvement and I saw evidence of this in my brief visits to classrooms and in displays around the school. Teachers have been encouraged to include more real-life problem-solving activities in mathematics, and efforts have been made to provide more opportunities for extended writing, including through the use of new technology. You have required teachers to invent classroom 'challenges' to stretch the most able, and organised one-to-one tuition to boost progress for some older pupils. However, these initiatives are being developed without sufficient evaluation, discussion or training, and this will limit their impact on pupils' progress.

You and the deputy headteacher are checking lessons regularly. However, what you discuss and record is still not focused well enough on how well pupils are learning. The need to improve the progress of the most-able pupils is an example of an area for improvement where, although action is being taken, there is a lack of overall co-ordination. There is no named leader in the school, and no shared understanding of which pupils to identify for additional stretch and challenge.

The report from the external review of governance has just been received. This identifies key strengths including the regular visits to lessons which governors already undertake. The review recommends that governors should hold the school to account in a more challenging way and ensure that all meetings focus on the school's improvement. There is evidence of governors responding well to this. Minutes of the 'Learning and Development' committee show this new group requiring clear and timely reports from the headteacher and asking questions about the progress pupils are making.

The school has not been well served by the local authority. The wide range of training for staff, promised in the introduction to the local authority statement of

action, is not evident. Changes of local authority personnel have not been well managed to provide continuity for the school. Governors and the headteacher feel that they have received contradictory advice from consultants provided by the local authority – most recently about the quality of teachers' marking. The headteacher values the support provided by another headteacher who is a National Leader for Education. However, the report of her visit to the school lacked sufficient challenge or a sharp enough focus on pupils' learning.

Following the monitoring inspection these judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector