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Mrs Jan O'Connor
Headteacher
Lower Meadow Primary School
Batemoor Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S8 8EE

Dear Mrs O'Connor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lower Meadow Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 May 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 January 2014.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher; the Chair of the Governing Body and six other governors; a representative of the local authority and other members of the senior leadership team. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement planning were evaluated. Other documents, including data on the progress of pupils and minutes of governing body meetings, were scrutinised.

Context

Since the inspection, the headteacher has had an extended period of sickness absence during which the deputy headteacher has led the school. The headteacher has now returned to work. The mathematics leader has accepted a new post at a

different school and will leave at the end of term. An external review of governance has recently been completed.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Senior leaders now have a better understanding of what is wrong in the school. However, the plans they have prepared to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection do not set out clearly enough the actions that need to be taken. Nor do they identify who will lead on each action and when actions will be delivered. The governing body has taken steps to increase its scrutiny of pupils' progress data, but is yet to put in place a system for checking the impact of the school's improvement plans. An external review of governance has been undertaken and the Chair of the Governing Body accepts the recommendations made.

Work to improve the quality of teaching is underway. In order to raise expectations, more challenging targets for pupils' achievement have been set and teachers are being held more accountable for the progress pupils make. Clear guidelines have been issued to all teachers regarding marking, the presentation of pupils' work and the teaching of reading. Some teachers are receiving specific support to help them improve the quality of lesson planning. The impact of this work is yet to be evaluated, but senior leaders are fully aware that the overall quality of teaching across the school needs to improve further and that the performance of teachers needs to be managed robustly.

Data management is much improved. Because of this, senior leaders have a better understanding of which pupils are making slower progress and systems for providing additional support are improving. Governors are also more aware of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' progress.

Members of the governing body have begun to address some of the gaps in their knowledge and skills. Training on the use of school performance data has been undertaken and a standards committee now meets each month to check on the progress of pupils. Although at an early stage, this committee is beginning to provide more scrutiny and challenge to senior leaders. However, not all governors have the skills to provide effective challenge and some are unclear of the impact of actions taken so far to improve the school.

The local authority provided limited support to the school through the period of the headteacher's recent absence. Some support from other schools has been brokered, but ongoing support to strengthen the quality of leadership and management has not been formalised. The local authority accepts a more formalised arrangement for

supporting leaders and managers is required to ensure they develop the skills to rapidly drive forward improvements in the quality of teaching and achievement.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is 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 Sheffield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector