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Ms Jill Davis
Terrington St John Primary School
School Road
Terrington St John
Wisbech
PE14 7SG

Dear Ms Davis

Special measures monitoring inspection of Terrington St John Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 1–2 July 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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.

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 Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Paul Tomkow
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - give pupils work that is at the right level for them, especially ensuring that it is hard enough to challenge the more able
 - use the skills of support staff effectively during all parts of the lesson
 - have sufficiently high expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' written work
 - encourage pupils to learn to work without always having direct help from adults.

- Improve pupils' achievement, especially in writing and reading, by:
 - improving teachers' knowledge of how to teach reading and writing, particularly the links between letters and the sounds they make
 - ensuring every opportunity is given to all pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - making sure that marking highlights the strengths in pupils' work, provides clear guidance about how it can be improved, and gives enough attention to the quality of writing and handwriting, whatever the subject
 - improving pupils' attendance.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring leaders:
 - check regularly that teachers' lessons and lesson plans result in pupils making better progress in their work, including those receiving support through the pupil premium
 - give all staff performance management objectives for improving their teaching, providing them with any necessary training to help achieve their targets, and holding them to account for the progress pupils make
 - use evidence in pupils' books to be sure that assessments of standards and progress are accurate, and record and present these judgements clearly
 - use more accurate information about how well the school is doing to write sharply focused plans for improving the school's performance
 - carefully, consistently and robustly follow up and record any inappropriate behaviour or incidents of bullying.

- Ensure governors gain a clear view of the school's effectiveness and the quality of its teaching within the federation, and demand improvements from leaders. An external review of governance should be carried out, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management could be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 July 2014.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to discuss progress since the previous inspection. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. The inspector spoke to parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day and also met with groups of pupils and listened to some of them read. Visits were made to lessons and pupils' books were scrutinised. Documents examined included the school improvement plan, records of behaviour monitoring, attendance information and data relating to pupils' academic progress.

Context

Since the previous inspection one teacher has left the school and a deputy headteacher has taken up post. On 1 June 2014 the school officially became part of The Windmill Primary Federation, a formal arrangement through which leadership, including governance, is shared with three other local schools.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the previous inspection standards have continued to rise. More pupils are now making good progress and an increasing number are working at the level expected for their age. This improvement is reflected in the school's latest assessments, including the provisional end of key stage national test results, which show that pupils have achieved higher levels overall this year. However, weaknesses remain and not all pupils have made the progress of which they are capable. This is because many pupils still have gaps in their knowledge and understanding, particularly in mathematics and writing.

Pupils' progress is now tracked more effectively. This has helped school leaders to identify where there is underperformance and to take action to support those pupils at risk of falling behind. Teaching assistants are now deployed more effectively to support individuals and groups, particularly disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. As a result of this additional support, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs now make progress at a rate similar to their peers. Pupils eligible for the pupil premium are also supported more effectively and the gap in achievement, between them and their peers, is closing.

The quality of teaching

Teaching has improved. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the school's records indicate that most teaching is now good. However this improvement is not

always reflected in the quality of work in pupils' books showing that teaching is not yet consistently good.

Phonics (using the sounds that letters make to read) is taught well. As a result, younger pupils enjoy reading more and are making better progress. They read regularly in school and at home and have access to a wide range of reading material. By the time they are in Year 6 most pupils are fluent, confident readers. The teaching of writing is also improving but not as rapidly. This is because errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling in pupils' writing are often not corrected. As a result, gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are not being addressed and pupils continue to make the same mistakes. The quality of handwriting and presentation is also in need of improvement. Too often teachers accept work which is poorly presented.

The overall quality of marking requires improvement. Although there are some examples of teachers using marking to help pupils to understand what they need to do to move on in their learning, this is not common. As a result, the quality of work produced and the progress pupils make in writing, mathematics and other subjects such as science and history are not as good as they should be.

The work of teaching assistants is now more effective. They participate actively in lessons to support individuals and groups of pupils. During this inspection teaching assistants were seen teaching older pupils about adjectives and adverbs and developing learning effectively. On another occasion, teaching assistants were observed teaching phonics successfully to younger pupils, whilst the teacher worked with pupils from a different year group.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Pupils appreciate the improvements that have been made at the school; they feel safe and enjoy being at school. Pupils are courteous and polite when speaking to adults, and behave well in class and at break times. They work hard for their teachers and are respectful towards each other. During lessons they now display more positive attitudes to their learning but, older children in particular, do not yet show a real sense of pride in their work. During this inspection many pieces of work were seen that were untidy and poorly presented.

Although the school has stressed the importance of good attendance, current rates of attendance are below the national average. Improving attendance, therefore, remains a priority for the school.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Systems for checking the effectiveness of teaching have improved. School leaders now observe teaching more regularly and, following these observations, teachers and teaching assistants are provided with feedback on strengths and areas for development. However, school leaders do not pay sufficient attention to the quality of work in pupils' books when making these checks. As a result they do not have a fully rounded view about standards and the impact of teaching over time. Nor have they ensured that teachers and teaching assistants have always followed agreed procedures or set high enough expectations for the pupils.

The headteacher has worked hard and effectively to ensure that suitable interim arrangements have been in place throughout a period of significant staff changes. This has enabled the school to continue to make progress during this challenging time. The school is now more settled and the improved quality of teaching is leading to better achievement. However, the headteacher recognises that weaknesses remain and further improvements are required.

Arrangements for school governance have been reorganised following the school's federation on 1 June 2014. The school now shares a governing body with three local schools. Appropriate committee structures are in place to ensure that there is a clear focus on standards. The new Chair of the Governing Body has already visited the school and, through his involvement in the improvement board which was established by the local authority following the inspection in April 2013, he is developing a good understanding of the school's strengths and the weaknesses that remain.

External support

The local authority has provided a good level of support and challenge to the school. It has provided training opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants and effective support and challenge for school leaders. The improvement board, which includes the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, monitors progress closely through regular meetings. At these meetings, the headteacher is held to account for the progress the school is making against the statement of action. The work of this board is clearly focused on improving standards.