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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 to your school on 12–13 November 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in 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.

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

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:
CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk
- The lead and team inspectors.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 11–12 November 2014

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, Chair of the Governing Body, a consultant headteacher and the local authority's education improvement adviser. Parts of 11 lessons were observed, most of which were undertaken jointly with the headteacher. Assessment information about pupils' progress and reviews of teachers' performance were considered, along with the school's action plans and the local authority's most recent review of progress. The inspector met with a group of pupils to seek their views about their work, learning and behaviour. He also spoke to some parents and carers to discuss their views about the school and what it is offering their children. The single central record was checked to ensure that the details for new staff have been added and that the school complies with safeguarding and staff vetting procedures. The focus of this visit was to establish the extent to which pupils' achievement and teaching are improving and the capacity of leaders, staff and governors to sustain improvement.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in July, two new teachers joined the school in September to replace some that have left. The Department for Education has nominated a preferred sponsor in preparation for the school becoming a sponsor-led academy in 2015.

Achievement of pupils at the school

There is a mixed picture to report following the most recent unvalidated national assessment results in 2014. Although the school meets the national floor standards for the first time in several years, (these are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2), pupils' attainment remains below the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. Assessments show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 continue to rise. Pupils currently in Year 2 are making reasonable progress in relation to their very low starting points.

Although the Key Stage 2 test results in 2014 were disappointing, the pupils in Year 6 that took the tests made more progress over the previous 12 months than at any similar period of time previously. Since the school was placed in special measures in October 2013, teachers and leaders have acted with more urgency to improve teaching and learning. This has led to demonstrable evidence of improvement to pupils' achievement in all classes. The significant underachievement reported at the

time of the school's inspection that placed it in special measures is being reversed because of more consistent and effective teaching, stable staffing and stronger leadership.

Nursery and Reception children are making good progress recognising letter sounds and are developing their reading and writing skills well. The programme being used to teach phonics (letters and sounds) in the Early Years Foundation Stage is having a positive impact on children's early experiences of reading and writing. Nonetheless, there are weaknesses in Key Stage 1 as results in the Year 1 national phonics screening check last year fell below national standards because of inconsistencies in the teaching of phonics. More stable staffing and consistent teaching is beginning to address this shortfall so that the pupils currently in Year 1 are starting to build on their good early years' experiences. Teachers and support staff have yet to reinforce common methods and practices in phonics sessions from Nursery through to Year 2 to make sure that all pupils learn how to read the sounds that letters make and recognise common spelling patterns in words.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well and are making better progress now than previously. There are now better planned intervention programmes and records of their progress and performance. Regular checks are now being made to ensure that an increasing proportion of pupils who have special educational needs reach the levels expected for their ages.

Despite the improvements to pupils' achievement, there is still more to be done to ensure that all pupils catch up on previously lost ground, and that the pace of improvement in mathematics catches up with that seen in reading and writing.

Improved teaching is narrowing the gaps that previously existed between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and that of other groups (the pupil premium is additional funding, which supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority). The most recent test results for pupils in Year 6 show, for example, that disadvantaged pupils made up a lot of lost ground to reach similar levels to other pupils in reading and writing.

The pace of improvement in mathematics is slower than in reading and writing. This is because mathematics lessons do not always provide opportunities for pupils to build on what they already know and understand. Attainment remains patchy in mathematics, reflecting teachers' and teaching assistants' general lack of subject knowledge.

The quality of teaching

For the first time since the school was placed in special measures, the learning observed in lessons, assessments of the rate of pupils' progress and the work in

books show that there is no inadequate teaching. Staff changes and newly appointed teachers have strengthened teaching and learning, providing more scope for leaders to secure more consistently good practice in all classes.

Teachers are increasingly making accurate assessments of pupils' progress and attainment. The systems used to manage this information are now well established and accessible to both staff and governors. As a result, each teacher has an accurate understanding of pupils' level of attainment and uses these assessments to set more accurate and ambitious learning targets for pupils to aim for. This, combined with more lessons that group pupils together of similar ability, is helping teachers and support staff to plan activities that are pitched at the right level of difficulty for all pupils.

Teachers are more confident and better informed about the progress pupils need to make to raise standards. However, in some lessons, particularly in mathematics, teachers and support staff do not check for any gaps in pupils' learning and understanding. This slows pupils' progress and leads to misconceptions and errors.

Where the teaching requires improvement or pupils' learning slows, teachers and support staff are less vigilant and do not always give sufficient attention to improving pupils' work. When pupils write extended pieces of work, or attempt to calculate problems in mathematics, the most effective teaching ensures that errors are addressed while pupils work.

There have been good improvements to teachers' marking. Pupils now have accurate measures of success in their individualised learning targets pasted into books. These help them work towards higher levels, and they understand the clear pointers for improvement that teachers set out in the marking. Pupils make good progress when they have opportunities to correct any misconceptions, but workbooks show that some pupils repeat unnecessary errors when adults do not help them to understand the reasons for their mistakes. In some mathematics lessons, for example, teaching or support staff lack sufficient subject knowledge to help identify where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils talk with more confidence about their work and reading choices because leaders and staff have done a great deal since the last monitoring inspection to improve the school library and curriculum topics. There are now more stimulating reading books for pupils to choose from, and more varied and interesting topics and themes for them to study.

Despite staff changes and reorganised year groupings in some classes that include mixed ages, pupils explained how much they enjoy their lessons and new topics, 'I am expected to listen and work hard, and the work about Vikings is really exciting,'

stated one pupil who went on to talk clearly about his learning targets. Another pupil confirmed, 'We have success criteria pasted in our books so we can check each time we write something to see if we are going to reach our targets.' These examples also explain why, in most lessons, pupils are much clearer about what they are expected to learn. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are also busy, engaged and enjoy a range of stimulating choices and activities, although some children do not sustain an activity for long enough and tend to drift from one area to another.

In most of the lessons observed, pupils were busy and productive. They happily engage in conversations with others; for example, in the Year 5 and 6 class, when discussing how best to describe their feelings as they observe illustrations depicting the period of the Vikings. Leaders and teachers are increasingly providing lessons that hold pupils' interests and enthusiasm. Tasks are usually varied and stimulating, engaging pupils' interest and resulting in more purposeful learning behaviour. As a result, there is much less disruptive or off-task behaviour in lessons now compared with previous monitoring inspections.

During a meeting with a group of older pupils in Key Stage 2, it was also clear that pupils are now required to read more widely and they could describe in some detail the characters in stories they are reading as well as offer opinions about different genres of books. This is a significant improvement since the last monitoring inspection.

Pupils are safe and secure, and form friendships easily. They are polite and courteous to their classmates and adults. Attendance rates are improving well and are edging above the national average. Persistent absence rates are reducing and pupils are usually punctual and ready for school. All the parents spoken to during the two days of this inspection were pleased with their children's education and the way their children are looked after and cared for by staff.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher has worked tirelessly and effectively with the governing body and the local authority to resolve some difficult staffing issues that had previously taken up a lot of time and effort. The senior leadership team and governing body now have a secure platform for more sustained improvement to teaching. There are now more clearly defined management roles and responsibilities so that the most effective teachers influence other teachers and teaching assistants to improve their practice.

Leaders monitor lessons and pupils' work more frequently and robustly to make sure that any pupils who are at risk of falling behind are identified sooner and intervention programmes are put in place to help those pupils to catch up. The

management and oversight of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is more focused and better organised now than previously.

Leaders have revised the curriculum by organising programmes of study into topics and themes that bring together a broad range of National Curriculum subjects. Combined with more accurate assessments of pupils' progress and performance, teachers are now better able to plan lessons that build on pupils' previous learning.

Leaders and governors are checking teachers' and teaching assistants' performance more robustly. Regular book reviews, learning walks and drop-in visits to lessons undertaken by senior leaders, mean that teachers are more accountable and are much clearer about what outcomes to expect from each lesson to ensure that pupils sustain good rates of progress. Nonetheless, leaders and staff have yet to improve learning enough in all lessons, particularly mathematics, as teachers and support staff lack sufficient knowledge of the mathematics programmes of study to consistently take pupils through the correct stages of learning.

Staff appointments and changes to staffing and management roles are building further capacity for sustained improvement. Having eliminated weak or inadequate teaching, leaders are now increasing the pace of improvement. There are challenging targets in the school's action plans for teachers and support staff to aim for. Staff morale is high and everyone is now pulling together because the staff feel valued, trusted and empowered to take on more responsibilities.

The governing body now includes better qualified, skilful and experienced governors. Having resolved the difficult staffing and personnel issues, the governing body is adopting a more strategic committee structure. This will be taking greater responsibility for gathering first-hand evidence to hold the school's leaders and staff more to account for pupils' progress and performance.

The Department for Education's preferred sponsor is preparing for the school to become a sponsor-led academy in 2015. The date for this has yet to be agreed, although another monitoring inspection will take place in the spring term 2015 to determine whether the school is ready to be removed from special measures.

External support

The local authority's education improvement adviser has recently undertaken an accurate review of the school's progress and provided leaders with a focus for sustained improvement to teaching. The support provided by a consultant headteacher has been effective, and further links with another headteacher of a good school have the potential to provide more opportunities for teachers and support staff to see and share good practice.