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18 November 2014

Ms Jenny Digges and Mr Russell Gray
Executive Headteacher and Head of School
Muskham Primary School
Main Street
North Muskham
Newark
NG23 6HD

Dear Ms Digges and Mr Gray

Special measures monitoring inspection of Muskham Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 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 July 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and the head of school, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. I visited every class briefly, spoke informally with pupils, and looked at their work. I observed pupils in the playground at playtime and spoke informally with the senior lunchtime supervisor. I scrutinised the school's documentation. I checked the single central record and reviewed the school's actions to support vulnerable pupils.

Context

Since the inspection in July, the headteacher has resigned. The deputy headteacher and a class teacher have left to take up roles in other schools. Two part-time class teachers are absent on long-term sick leave. The local authority has brokered the support of an executive headteacher, and has seconded another senior leader from Greasley Beauvale Primary to become head of school. It has also seconded a senior

leader from Bowbridge Primary to become deputy headteacher. A medium-term supply teacher has been secured. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected and has been in post since July 2014. Three new parent governors have been elected. The local authority has co-opted an experienced governor to offer the governing body support. The governing body is considering its position with regard to becoming a sponsored academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since coming to the school, the new leadership team has acted swiftly and decisively to put plans in place to secure school improvement. Improvement plans are robust and focused correctly on improving the quality of teaching in order to raise standards across the school. Plans have clear timelines for improvement. Leaders regularly check the progress of pupils through visits to lessons, by looking at pupils' work and by closely tracking data on pupils' progress. As a result, teachers are provided with more detailed feedback on how to improve their practice. Leaders have acted quickly to address areas of weakness in the quality of teaching and have put plans in place to provide support for individual teachers to improve their work. Checks show that teachers are responding positively to the feedback they are receiving and are improving aspects of their teaching.

Since the last inspection, leaders have addressed systems for safeguarding pupils. All staff have been trained in child protection. There is a more robust system in place for protecting vulnerable pupils. Systems for working with other agencies to keep pupils safe are sound. There are better arrangements for managing playtimes and lunchtimes in the playground. Increased numbers of staff have been placed on duty. As a result, areas of the playground where pupils were considered to be at risk at the last inspection have been reduced considerably. Improved site security and doors that are secured at the beginning and end of the day mean that risks of intruders have also been reduced. School leaders and the governing body are exploring solutions for further site security with regard to more secure gates and perimeter fencing.

The governing body is determined to bring about change. It has acted swiftly to reorganise itself and use the skills it has to better fulfil its role. The governing body has accepted the urgency needed to improve outcomes for pupils. It has responded effectively to the review of governance by developing its own action plan to check the work of school leaders. Better systems have been developed to track the impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching. Governors are becoming more robust in challenging school leaders. They carefully track the school improvement plan and meet regularly with senior leaders to ask pertinent questions and to check upon improvements for themselves through regular visits to school.

The local authority was aware that the school was vulnerable and had already carried out a review to assess the school's needs. It had devised a support plan for developing the school's leadership prior to the last inspection. Since that inspection, it has brokered considerable support for the school through the temporary appointment of the executive headteacher, the head of school and the acting deputy headteacher. These appointments are effectively moving the school forward at a fast rate. The local authority acted quickly to carry out the review of governance. It has supported the governors to establish a plan to improve school effectiveness. It is supporting school leaders to check the quality of teaching and learning and is providing effective challenge to implement change quickly.

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 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 Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor

Her Majesty's Inspector