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Ms Helen Shead
Headteacher
Lancot School
Lancot Drive
Dunstable
Bedfordshire
LU6 2AP

Dear Ms Shead

Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Lancot Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 2015 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 was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in September 2014. 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

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

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2014

- Make sure teaching promotes good learning and progress for all groups of pupils in each lesson by ensuring teachers:
 - understand the knowledge, understanding and skills that pupils should acquire in each subject
 - keep a close eye on how pupils respond to learning activities and adapt these if pupils are not making the progress they should
 - provide clear explanations to pupils about what they are learning
 - are more ambitious about what all pupils can achieve, especially higher ability pupils, and plan learning activities accordingly
 - explain to teaching assistants precisely how to help pupils with their learning
 - explain precisely what pupils should do to improve their work and give them enough time to make these improvements
 - model good handwriting and show pupils how to record their work neatly and carefully in their exercise books and check that this is done.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by improving teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts and curriculum content.
- Improve leadership and management of provision for pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs by making sure all staff know and understand what these needs are and precisely how to help pupils make the best possible progress in lessons.
- Improve children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring that teachers and early years support staff help children learn well when they are choosing their own activities by:
 - asking questions that help children think about and explain their ideas
 - observing children exploring different activities so they know precisely when to intervene with new ideas or questions to extend learning
 - having meaningful and sustained conversations with children as they play, to develop their vocabulary and understanding of concepts.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by making sure:
 - teaching improves rapidly
 - senior leaders and governors keep a vigilant eye on pupils' learning and progress and take immediate action if this is not good enough
 - all leaders have enough time to carry out their additional responsibilities effectively.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 2 July 2015

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, two members of the governing body, the early years leader, the English subject leader and a local authority adviser. The inspector analysed assessment information, and scrutinised improvement plans and documents relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning. She spent time in the Nursery and Reception classes with the early years leader and, together with the headteacher, visited all classes, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at their work.

Context

Since the inspector's last visit, the assistant headteacher with responsibility for standards has taken up her position. She is currently teaching a Year 4 class to cover for a teacher who has left the school. A newly qualified teacher has taken on the other Year 4 class. A Year 3 teacher has also left and the class is being taught by the intervention teacher. A Reception class teacher has resigned and will leave the school at the end of term. Two parent governors have left the governing body. There are plans for the school to become a sponsored academy, in the autumn term, with the Challenge Trust.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher has more tightly focused her attention on driving improvement. Although this means that some aspects of the monitoring of provision for pupils with special educational needs are insufficiently detailed, there is greater rigour in analysing the work of the school, planning for improvement and monitoring the impact of work being done to address priorities. As a result of the actions being taken, there are evident improvements in the quality of teaching in most classes. The changes in staffing and improved procedures for analysing the quality of the school's work mean there is increased capacity for further improvement.

The governing body has decreased in size and there are now no parent representatives or formal clerking arrangements. Arrangements to address these important aspects of governance are on hold because of the move to academy status. Governors have planned their monitoring of the school's improvement to better match identified improvement priorities. For example, they have visited the early years to see at first hand the changes being made and have looked at pupils' work to see how well the marking policy is being used.

There is good improvement in the provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. Changes have been made to how learning areas have been organised so areas, both indoors and outside, are more welcoming and better suited to the different learning activities children participate in. The pupil support team has

been involved in putting together new procedures for managing behaviour that are well suited to the youngest children's needs. As a result, their behaviour is more consistently managed so it is better. The focus given to improving writing skills has been successful in engaging pupils more. During the visit, a group of boys were paying great attention to ensuring that their writing in books about the Caribbean was accurate. They used additional resources provided in the classroom to stimulate their writing and to spell 'tricky' words. As a result, they made good progress in developing their key skills.

Teaching in Key Stage 2 has improved since the last visit. Expectations of pupils are higher and teachers are all using the agreed procedures for making the learning intended in lessons clear to pupils. There is variation, however, in how well these support pupils to make progress. Where they are most effective, they help pupils to carefully evaluate how well they are learning and make clear what they need to do next. Teachers are using the school's policy for marking pupils' work more consistently and telling pupils how well they are doing. As a result, pupils have a better understanding of when they are making mistakes and of what they need to do to make further progress in their learning.

There is still some inconsistency in pupils' achievement. This is mostly because of the continued changes in staffing and because, in some year groups, there is still a need for pupils' learning to accelerate to make up for the lack of progress they have made in the past. Assessment information shows that outcomes at the end of the early years will exceed those achieved nationally in 2014; this is an improvement which reflects leaders' actions to raise the quality of provision. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in their understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is similarly increased. Outcomes in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 are set to be broadly in line with the national standards achieved in 2014; they are assessed as being slightly lower in mathematics, which represents a decline. In the remaining year groups, leaders and teachers have successfully implemented the new National Curriculum, and systems are established to assess pupils' achievement against the higher expectations in English and mathematics. These have successfully identified the extra work pupils need to do to ensure they meet the higher standards and, in many instances, these gaps have been addressed. Analysis shows that attainment and progress in mathematics are the principal aspects of pupils' achievement which still require the most improvement.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Leaders have a good understanding of the progress and attainment of all pupils and have worked with local authority advisers and colleagues to ensure that assessments are accurate. Regular meetings, using teachers' assessments, are identifying the barriers to learning faced by pupils who are falling behind, and plans are implemented to support them to overcome these.

- The deputy headteacher's leadership of teaching has continued to be a driving force in improvement. Her expectations are high and improvements seen during the inspection are good evidence of how effective her work is. Staff training and development opportunities are carefully followed up to make sure that they contribute to the improvements necessary. Training provided for the pupil support team has ensured that they question and support pupils to make progress in their learning increasingly well.
- Actions taken by the early years leader have been effective in securing rapid improvement. A sharply focused 'vision' document makes the expectations of early years education at Lancot School very clear. Staff are working together more collaboratively and are promoting children's language development and behaviour more carefully. As a result of these improvements, children are becoming more resilient and are making more rapid progress in their learning.
- The new assistant headteacher, appointed to lead the improvement of standards, has rapidly established an understanding of pupils' achievement. Pupils she is teaching say that they are enjoying learning and are challenged in their work.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning have strengthened. In all the lesson seen, they were working hard to meet the challenges they had been set. Their work shows increasingly careful presentation and attention to the detail of spelling and punctuation in English and to the layout of their work in mathematics.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The new inclusion leader was appointed in February. She has spent time in school and worked with pupils; however, she will not take up her post fully until September. This means that the monitoring of the achievement and progress of disabled pupils and those who have special education needs lacks sufficient detail. The impact of extra support and intervention is not well enough understood, so pupils' individual learning needs are not always effectively met, particularly in mathematics.
- Although the mathematics leader has implemented the new National Curriculum and completed analysis of pupils' progress and of the quality of teaching, there is not enough evidence of the immediate impact of this work on improvement. As a result, achievement in mathematics is lagging behind that in English.
- Governors do not have the level of information necessary to judge whether the use of the pupil premium (extra funding received to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) provides good value for money. Although they know how the funding is spent, they do not know how effective the different aspects of

support are on improving the achievement and well-being of disadvantaged pupils.

External support

The headteacher has sought support from a range of sources accessed through her own networking as well as drawing on the expertise given and brokered by the local authority. The latter has validated aspects of leaders' work; for example, the work of the Central Bedfordshire leader of education's work considering the accuracy of judgements made about the quality of teaching and assessment. Advisers have also provided developmental advice for the improvements made to the provision in the early years.

The local authority adviser has continued to chair the governing body monitoring group. Although relationships have not always been strong, the headteacher is clear that this has been a factor in driving the pace of improvement. Through contributing to the group, subject leaders have become more confident in their roles and developed improved analysis and reporting skills. Governors have been kept up to date with an external perspective of the school's work.

Other external support has been sought to address improvement priorities, and this has effectively facilitated the strategic development of the early years, enhanced teachers' planning in English and improved staff confidence in teaching mathematics.