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10 July 2015

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

Dear Mr Gray and Ms Digges

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Muskham Primary School**

Following my visit with to your school on 7–8 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 became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2014. 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 newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. One further newly qualified teacher may be appointed.

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

Jan Connor

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

cc. Chair of appropriate authority for Muskham Primary School

cc. John Slater Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure that all teachers:
  - take account of what pupils already know and can do, especially average-ability and more-able pupils, to ensure pupils make best progress
  - have high expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve and the quality and quantity of work that they produce
  - ensure that guidance to pupils on how to improve their work leads to improvement.
  
- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by insisting that teachers:
  - teach pupils how to spell correctly, use grammar and punctuation appropriately and write legibly
  - expect pupils to solve harder mathematical problems with improved accuracy and always have something more challenging to go on to.
  
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning by:
  - encouraging pupils to sustain good learning behaviour in class by ensuring they concentrate fully on their learning, insisting on high quality presentation of work.
  
- Improve the impact of leadership by:
  - improving teamwork across the different tiers of leadership and management and among governors
  - ensuring that safeguarding and health and safety requirements are met and that pupils are kept safe while in the school's care
  - improving the management and supervision of pupils' behaviour in the playground
  - ensuring that assessments of pupils' learning are accurate
  - ensuring that the school development plan quantifies more precisely how success will be measured
  - making sure that governors develop their skills so that they can hold leaders and managers to account more robustly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 7–8 July 2015**

### **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and the head of school, the acting deputy headteacher and the early years leader. The inspector also met with the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and the Chair of the Finance Committee and a local authority representative. She spoke with parents and pupils. The inspector observed seven lessons, all jointly with either the executive headteacher or the head of school. Pupils' books were scrutinised. The single central record was checked.

### **Context**

From September 2015, the head of school will become the substantive headteacher. In addition, the acting deputy headteacher will become the substantive deputy headteacher. The executive headteacher will leave the school at the end of the summer term. The English leader resigned and left the school at the end of the spring term. A temporary job share is in place until the end of the summer term. A teacher resigned and left during the summer term. Another teacher has also resigned and leaves at the end of the summer term. A new English leader and two new class teachers have been appointed for September. A new leader for the early years will also take up her role at the beginning of September.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Since the last monitoring inspection, attainment and progress across the school have continued to improve. More pupils in Key Stage 2 are closer to age-related expectations than they were in September last year. In some subjects and year groups, a number of pupils are above age-related expectations. This is particularly true for mathematics and reading; improvements in writing are slower. These improvements represent at least good progress for most pupils and, for some, progress has accelerated even faster. Attainment gaps in Key Stage 1 and the early years have been successfully closed for the majority pupils. This is as a result of the leaders' rigorous focus on improving in the quality of teaching.

The end of key stage outcomes for Year 6 this year mean that, in reading, writing, and mathematics at Level 4, pupils are attaining broadly in line with the national averages for last year. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 in reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling is broadly in line with the national averages for last year also. However, in mathematics and writing pupils' attainment is below the national average and fewer pupils are attaining the higher Level 5. Not enough has been expected of the most-able pupils previously and, as a result, no pupils attained Level 6 in any subject this year. In September, pupils of all abilities in Year 6 were well below age-related expectations and so these outcomes represent at least good

progress in learning, and in many cases rapid and sustained progress in learning, over the course of this year.

Outcomes for the end of Key Stage 1 have improved also. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are above last year's national averages at Level 2 and an above-average proportion of pupils attained Level 3. Pupils' attainment in mathematics at Level 3 is particularly strong and demonstrates the increased expectation of what many pupils can achieve at this school. Attainment in mathematics, reading and writing is similar for boys and girls at the end of this key stage.

In the early years, the percentage of children achieving a good level of development this year is above that of last year's national average. As a result, children are much better prepared for the next stage in their education. Outcomes for the end of the Reception Year are particularly strong for children achieving the early learning goals in personal and social development, mathematics and the expressive arts. Girls' attainment is higher in reading and boys' attainment is higher in understanding the world and mathematics. Fewer girls exceeded the early learning goals in mathematics and understanding of the world. However, although the percentage of children exceeding a good level of development has increased this year, not enough children achieve this goal.

In the Year 1 screening check in phonics (the sound that letters make), a higher percentage of pupils achieved the standard than the previous year's national average.

Outcomes across the rest of the school are also improving and progress is accelerating for nearly all pupils in all three subjects, although it is slower in writing than in reading and mathematics. Generally, boys and girls make similar progress in all three subjects. However, some inconsistencies remain. For example, girls' attainment is higher in reading and writing in Years 3 and 4, whereas, in Year 5, it is similar. Boys' attainment in mathematics is better in Year 5 and it is similar to girls' attainment in Year 3. There are also inconsistencies in the rates of progress made by boys and girls in all three subjects across these year groups.

Pupils supported by pupil premium funding make similar progress to their peers in all three subjects. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make progress in line with their peers. However, across the school, not all the most-able pupils are being challenged well enough for them to achieve their full potential.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Weaknesses in teaching are being eradicated through the rigorous checking of teachers' work and the work in pupils' books. Senior leaders and staff are working to close the attainment gaps in pupils'

learning. However, the quality of teaching is not consistent across all classes and subjects to ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential.

Teachers are planning better to cater for the abilities of different groups of pupils. It is apparent this year that teachers have raised their expectations of what their pupils can learn and of how quickly they are able to understand new learning. As a result, the volume of work in pupils' books has hugely increased from the previous year. Consequently, the progress pupils make in their learning has also increased in line with teachers' new expectations.

The teaching of mathematics has improved. Focused training for all staff has ensured teachers are supporting their pupils to solve mathematical problems and deepen their understanding of addition, multiplication, subtraction and division. For example, the very youngest pupils in the early years were seen digging up a 'message in a bottle' and solving the addition problems inside. Children were then seen confidently writing their own number problems for each other. As a result, children's mastery of mathematics increased. Pupils in Year 2 were solving problems associated with money and working hard to identify the coins needed to make up an amount of money. The work in their books clearly demonstrated the good progress they were making in understanding this challenging learning.

Teachers' questioning has improved. Pupils have increased opportunities to explain their thinking. Teachers' questions are more open-ended and allow pupils to demonstrate their understanding through a dialogue with their teachers. As a result, teachers are shaping their teaching better to address in lessons pupils' particular learning needs. For example, in Year 5, the most-able pupils had a good understanding of what they needed to learn and were confident to discuss any misconceptions with their teacher. As a result, their learning progressed at a quicker rate. Marking across the school is now consistent. Teachers all follow the school's policy of giving pupils time to respond to marking to improve their work.

The work of teaching assistants has improved. They are more effective in supporting learning because of focused training and better communication with class teachers. As a result, those pupils who need further support to develop their learning are making better progress.

Teaching in the early years is better. Improvements in provision mean children have activities that engage them when they are not working with their teachers. The learning environment has been improved, with new resources and easy access to the different areas within the classroom, both indoors and outside. As a result, on this visit, children were seen engrossed in activities that challenged and excited them throughout the day. However, teachers are not drawing enough on their knowledge of children's understanding in order to meet the early learning goals and so progress is not as swift as it could be.

Opportunities for writing are not well developed. Teachers do not give pupils enough time to write at length across different subjects. As a result, pupils' progress is not as fast as in reading and mathematics and fewer pupils reach age-related expectations in this subject.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved considerably this year as a result of better quality teaching. The behaviour of pupils is generally good in lessons. Where this is not the case, it is because teachers do not expect enough of their pupils. Pupils are proud of their school and of their achievements. Pupils spoken with during this visit said they 'get on well' with each other. They said playtimes are better and they felt safer because they are able to see the adults in the 'fluorescent vests' and ask for help more quickly should they need it. Around school, pupils continue to be polite, friendly and courteous.

Parents who spoke to the inspector also agreed that their children were happier coming to school. One parent said, 'Children can't wait to get into school in the morning.' Many parents also felt that their children's learning had improved during the year, and they appreciated the rewards and praise their children received.

Work in the playground to minimise the risk to pupils' safety from intrusion from a nearby road has been completed.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The leadership of the school continues to demonstrate a resolute determination to improve outcomes for the pupils. Leaders are ambitious and set high expectations for all staff to improve the quality of their work. This clear message has had a galvanising impact on the quality of learning this year and has resulted in many pupils achieving challenging targets for improvement.

The head of school has already established himself within the school community and many parents told the inspector that they felt the impact of his work has made a considerable difference, including better communication, improved behaviour and better outcomes for their children. In her classroom, the acting deputy headteacher has set a high standard for others to follow. This senior team is ready for the reducing role of the executive headteacher and can now take the school forward. However, the complete leadership team is not in place. Until this is established, some improvements remain fragile.

Leaders' ambitious targets for the end of this year have been achieved through a rigorous focus on improving teaching and improving the quality of the curriculum. Leaders regularly check the quality of work in pupils' books and know the pupils well. They set targets for improvement closely linked to pupils' particular learning

needs and deploy staff appropriately to intervene when pupils fall behind targets. As a result, more pupils reach their learning goals. School leaders have also secured improvements in the early years quickly through better resources, training and support for teachers.

The governing body is developing its own vision of excellence for the school. It is determined to achieve this, working alongside the senior leadership team. The Chair of the Governing Body has successfully shared the responsibility for governance with other governors, and all have taken up these roles in earnest. Governors have visited the school regularly and spoken with pupils, checked the quality of work in pupils' books and met with school leaders. Governors know the school well and challenge the head of school to explain data on pupils' outcomes regularly. However, the governing body is not strategically linked to the school improvement plan in a way that ensures it is as effective as possible in holding leaders to account for their work.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to provide effective and timely support to school leaders. It has successfully supported the governing body to secure the school's leadership team. It has also brokered a new partnership with Minster Teaching School Alliance (MTSA) to support school development in teaching and learning, middle leadership development, and support for the new substantive headteacher and deputy headteacher. It has also identified funding to ensure the MTSA will carry out this work. The local authority has brokered and funded further support from Selston Infant School to develop provision in the early years and Key Stage 1, and Stanhope Primary School, to support the Year 6 teacher who was new to this role in September.