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Mr Smythe and Mr Brookes  
Thornton Primary School  
Main Street  
Thornton  
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Leicestershire  
LE67 1AH

Dear Mr Smythe and Mr Brookes

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Thornton Primary School**

Following my visit to your academy on 27 January 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good academy.

The academy should take further action to:

- write an action plan following the review of governance that details how any further training and development needs will be addressed
- further accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils and write an action plan so governors can evaluate the effectiveness of the funding
- improve the progress of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you both and two members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school development plan was evaluated as well as documents related to pupils' progress, performance management and safeguarding. The Acting Senior Lead Teacher of the school gave me a tour of all classrooms and we scrutinised pupils' work. I also met a group of pupils from Year 2 to Year 6.

## **Context**

Soon after the previous monitoring inspection, the previous headteacher took leave of absence and resigned her position with effect from 31 December 2015. During the headteacher's absence, you both became involved in the leadership of the school and have split the responsibilities of the headteacher's role between you. You are headteachers of Newcroft Primary School and of Ashby Willesley Primary School respectively, which are part of the Symphony Primary Schools Partnership.

The senior teacher left at Christmas to take up a new post. The senior teacher's class was split into two other classes due to financial constraints. A learning support assistant also left at Christmas. Two governors resigned after my last visit and there is one community governor vacancy. The Year 6 teacher has been given the role of Acting Senior Lead Teacher during the interim period before the appointment of a substantive headteacher.

## **Main findings**

You have worked very effectively together to move the school forward. You have taken decisive action to improve leadership and the quality of teaching and learning. The academy development plan has clear actions which has enabled governors to hold leaders to account for the performance of the academy, except for the impact of pupil premium funding. Robust systems to check the rate of progress that pupils make are in place. As a consequence, you, other leaders and teachers know which groups of pupils are making good progress and which pupils need more support to accelerate their progress. This has led to most groups of pupils making better progress, including the most-able pupils. The procedures for the performance management of teachers have been strengthened and are now closely linked to the national teachers' standards.

Governors have scrutinised this process to ensure only good performance is rewarded. You have also worked hard to update most of the required information on the academy's website. In addition, I have asked you to update the academy's special educational needs report on the website by 11 February 2016.

Governors have closely monitored the performance of the academy and are aware of the strengths and areas for development. They are working more closely with teachers and the Chair has recently attended a staff meeting at the academy.

Governors are increasingly holding leaders to account for the progress of pupils, including the performance of disadvantaged pupils. Governors have also had the academy's accounts audited and, due to savings made in the current financial year, the academy's budget is in a much healthier position.

You have evaluated how well the pupil premium funding was spent last year to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. You found that disadvantaged pupils did not make the progress that they were capable of. Therefore, the provision for disadvantaged pupils has been changed and there is a mixture of one-to-one support and small-group support to accelerate the progress of this group. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils are now making much better progress than they did in the past. However, leaders recognise that the progress of this group needs to accelerate further to raise their attainment. I have asked you both to put your actions into a plan so governors can judge if the actions taken have been successful. You have agreed to send me this plan by 11 February 2016.

Your close tracking of pupil progress has highlighted that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not making as much progress as they should. Each class has reviewed their provision for this group and you are supporting the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) in her new role to successfully evaluate the provision.

Pupils are working well in classes and display good attitudes to learning. They follow the teacher's advice in their books and act upon it. Pupils regularly check how well they have learnt within a lesson. They say this helps them because teachers follow up any concerns they may have about their learning. Pupils also enjoy the 'silver star' challenge, which are tasks set to extend their learning further. Pupils are taking more pride in their work and strive for a pen licence. More opportunities for mathematical reasoning and writing at length are being provided in most classes. As a consequence, pupils' progress is improving.

### **External support**

The link with the Symphony Primary Schools Partnership has improved teaching and learning. Teachers have been able to observe outstanding practice at other schools, be part of moderation meetings of pupils' work and the SENCO is receiving support for her new role. You have brought good experience to quickly improve the leadership of the school. Your monitoring of the school's performance, through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and tracking of pupil progress, has enabled other leaders to identify where good or better teaching is taking place and where teaching needs to improve. Swift action has been taken to improve weaker teaching and, as a result, the quality of teaching and learning is improving rapidly.

The governors have undergone a review of governance and attended training on how to judge the performance of the school. They are scrutinising the performance of the school more robustly and challenging leaders about the performance of pupils. However, they have not written an action plan following the review of

governance to list further training and development needs. The Chair of Governors has agreed to submit this plan to me by 24 March 2016.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Martin Finch  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**