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Mr N Fowler
Headteacher
Lyndhurst Primary School
Heron Street
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Dear Mr Fowler

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lyndhurst Primary School

Following my visit with Maureen Hints, Ofsted inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2015. 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may only appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection after consultation with, and approval by, me.

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 Oldham.

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2015

- Take steps to improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that it is at least good, to raise standards for all groups of pupils, so that they can make good or better progress, by ensuring that:
 - teachers' knowledge and skills to teach reading, writing and mathematics are good enough to enable all groups of pupils to achieve well
 - all staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, including of their handwriting and presentation of work
 - teachers set challenging and appropriate targets for pupils of all groups and, particularly boys, the disadvantaged and disabled pupils and those pupils with special educational needs
 - the most-able pupils are fully challenged to think hard and achieve their best
 - assessment information is accurate and used effectively to accelerate pupils' learning in all subjects
 - pupils' work is regularly marked and that marking consistently provides useful guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and that this advice is acted upon
 - pupils' numeracy skills provide a secure base for further learning and providing opportunities for them to apply these skills in subjects in other than mathematics
 - standards in reading are raised by strengthening younger pupils' knowledge of phonics and increasing opportunities for pupils of all ages to read more widely
 - pupils have more opportunities to improve and extend their writing skills across a range of subjects, as well as in literacy lessons.

- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety, particularly in Years 5 and 6, so that they are at least good, by ensuring that:
 - leaders take effective action to tackle incidents of bullying, poor behaviour and disrespect
 - all staff and pupils follow the school's new behaviour policy and staff have the skills to manage pupils' behaviour effectively
 - teachers consistently support and challenge all pupils to develop good attitudes to learning and respect for others
 - the curriculum is strengthened so that pupils have a good understanding of how to deal with bullying
 - the methods for recording and following up behaviour and safety incidents in order to prevent reoccurrence are strengthened.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, so there is a strong and collective capacity to quickly improve the effectiveness of the school by ensuring that:
 - the achievement of different groups of pupils is regularly checked in order to put action in place more swiftly if underachievement is identified
 - clear, measurable steps in improvement plans show how well the school is progressing
 - the appraisal of teachers' performance is regularly reviewed and that they are held rigorously to account for pupils' progress
 - subject leaders' skills are developed so they are effective in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their subjects
 - governors effectively hold the school to account for its performance and play a full part in monitoring the expenditure of the pupil premium and primary school physical education and sports funding.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 October 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed teaching in each class from Year 1 to Year 6. They also looked through a sample of pupils' work and talked formally with five groups of pupils. An inspector observed an assembly and met some parents afterwards. Parent's views, expressed through the school's own survey and through Ofsted's survey, Parent View, were also taken into account. Inspectors observed part of a lesson taught by an external sports coach and talked with pupils at break and lunchtimes. They considered a wide range of documents, including the school's revised action plan, results of the end of year assessments, minutes of the governing body meetings and evaluations of the school's work undertaken by external professionals. Inspectors spoke with a large group of governors, a representative of the local authority and a range of staff.

Context

Since my last monitoring inspection, in May 2015, there have been some significant staff changes. In addition to you starting in September 2015 as headteacher, a new teacher, seconded from another local authority, started work leading the school's progress in English. Two teachers left at the end of August 2015, leaving two vacancies. Senior leaders have filled these gaps to ensure pupils' education is not disrupted. Discussions about converting the school into an academy in the spring term are at an advanced stage.

Outcomes for pupils

There has been a significant improvement in pupils' reading skills. The successful leadership of reading and introduction of a highly structured system of teaching phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) have resulted in increased attainment and progress throughout the school. Most pupils now attain the expected level of phonics by the end of Year 1. In 2015, boys and disadvantaged pupils caught up with their peers and, overall, pupils attained higher than other pupils nationally. By the end of Year 2, a much higher proportion of pupils attained higher levels in reading and were well-prepared to take on reading in other subjects in the Key Stage 2 classes. Senior leaders have changed their approach to small-group teaching of reading and made changes to the library. These changes have been successful in developing pupils' understanding of vocabulary, characters and breadth of literature. By the end of Year 6, in 2015 a much higher proportion of pupils attained the higher Level 5 than was the case in 2014.

Leaders have also improved other outcomes, such as pupils' keenness to respond in lessons and their interest and engagement in their work, including homework. Pupils

who spoke to inspectors described improvements to homework which are helping to develop their creativity and research skills.

Leaders have focused improvement work on reading. Pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics dipped in 2015. Only three quarters of pupils made expected progress between Year 2 and Year 6, which is much lower than other pupils nationally. The gap in performance between disadvantaged pupils and others widened in 2015 compared with 2014. An external report just before the national tests indicated that there would be an improvement in attainment, to match the school's own assessments. However, the assessments from the external support school and the teachers' assessments were inaccurate and over-generous. The difference in attainment in mathematics between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils grew in 2015, indicating that the pupil premium has not been effective. There is a need to focus, in the next few months, on establishing an improvement in pupils' outcomes in mathematics.

Attainment in writing by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 showed little improvement in 2015. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others remained similar to that in 2014.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching, learning and assessment have improved. In addition to successful changes to the teaching of reading, there have also been improvements in teachers' subject knowledge. This was observed in the way some teachers taught, explained and demonstrated ideas and concepts to their pupils and in their increased expectations. One teacher in an English lesson would not accept simple phrases and sentences from the pupils and insisted on more complex sentence structures using, for example, similes, metaphors and personification. Similarly, in a design and technology lesson, the teacher asked groups of pupils well-devised questions while assessing and checking their understanding. This enabled the pupils to increase their understanding and their skills.

Teaching in mathematics has not improved enough. The teaching of calculation is sound but teachers do not do enough to develop pupils' mathematical understanding, their ability to explain and reason using mathematics or to solve a range of problems. This means pupils move on too quickly without fully grasping a mathematical idea or understanding connections between aspects of mathematics.

An issue at the previous inspection was the lack of impact from adults' feedback and marking. Work is now marked more frequently and in line with the school's marking policy. All teachers use grids to set out higher expectations and success criteria for each lesson. Pupils told inspectors that they liked this system because it helped them to know what they had to achieve in the lesson. There is still some variability between teachers in how pupils respond to teachers' feedback, including marking. In some classes it is more successful than others, partially because teachers place

greater emphasis and precision on enabling pupils to reflect on prior feedback and using this to improve their next pieces of work.

There has been little improvement in the teaching of the most-able pupils in writing and in mathematics. In particular, teachers do not challenge the most-able disadvantaged pupils as much as they should. This, in part, is because previously the focus was on closing the gap in attainment between this group of pupils and others in class, by providing small group teaching for lower-ability pupils rather than providing for and extending the most able.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school is very different from the picture painted by the inspection report. The leadership of behaviour has been impressive. Pupils, parents, staff, external visitors and governors all agree that behaviour has improved around the school, at breaktimes and in lessons. The seven school expectations of behaviour are highly visible but, more importantly, every group of pupils who spoke to inspectors and every staff member knew what they were, what they meant and how to apply them consistently.

There have been improvements in the recording of behaviour. Senior leaders' and governors' high-quality analyses of records identify trends and patterns in any behaviour issues. As a consequence, leaders target resources successfully to reduce the number of incidents. The number of name-calling incidents has fallen, as has the number of more serious incidents such as fighting. Pupils drop less litter and food in the canteen and are more respectful of other people around them. Pupils treat each other with more respect. It was a common sight to see pupils of different genders, faiths, beliefs and from different ethnic backgrounds working and playing together. The school is now harmonious. The inspectors were greeted frequently by polite pupils with good manners.

In a few classes, although they responded to adults' requests, some pupils very quietly did not get on with their work and wasted learning time doing very little. The teachers still need to work to tackle this low-level behaviour in lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

The new headteacher is highly visible around school and, according to parents, pupils and staff, has a calming influence. Already, in a few weeks, he has begun to establish an ethos in which expectations of teaching are higher. This was evident in the determination to appoint the right people to work at Lyndhurst and not to employ any teachers to just cover teachers' absences. During the joint observations with inspectors it was clear that the headteacher has an accurate judgement of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching.

Systems of performance management have improved further. These are now more focused and simpler so that teachers are aware of areas for improvement, which are linked to school action plans, and there are clearer lines of responsibility.

The school's improvement plan is much better and now meets requirements. It is a focused, effective working document with sensible timescales for ongoing improvement.

Governance is much improved since the last inspection and members of the governing body are providing high quality scrutiny, evaluation and challenge. There are strong systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school and use multiple sources for information. As a result, governors' knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the progress of improvements is much better.

External support

In two key aspects the external support has made a very positive impact on the school's improvement. The impact of the behaviour specialist has been significant in enabling the school to diagnose precisely what behaviour issues there are, how to record, evaluate and track them effectively and how to reduce them. The local authority appointed two highly skilled and knowledgeable governors and their impact is marked on developing systems and procedures for governors to have better oversight over the school. The impact of the external support to improve teaching has been limited. Some of the diagnostic reports completed by a support school have been unhelpful and in some ways inaccurate. The local authority needs to provide better external support to tackle teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics.