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Anne Allen  
Acting Headteacher  
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NN18 9DT

Dear Mrs Allen

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Danesholme Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 27–28 April 2016, 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 that 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 that took place in October 2015.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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 chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephen McMullan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in October 2015.**

- Improve the quality of teaching and achievement for all pupil groups, in Reception Year, Year 1 and Year 2 by ensuring that all teachers:
  - use assessment information to plan activities that are stimulating and challenging for different abilities and needs so that all pupils are fully involved and enjoy their learning
  - intervene regularly to check pupils' learning and understanding
  - focus on showing pupils how to write letters properly, spell simple words correctly and punctuate sentences successfully so that pupils' writing skills develop more quickly.
- Improve children's personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
  - all staff follow the behaviour policy so that there is a more consistent approach to managing behaviour
  - adults are more vigilant and identify and manage the pupils who do not behave well in the playground
  - incidents of poor behaviour are consistently reported and logged, analysed and acted upon
  - children in Nursery and Reception are taught to keep the classroom environment safe by making sure that they do not leave items littering up the floor space
  - all pupils attend regularly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - the monitoring of teaching has a sharper focus on pupils' learning and that teaching staff are provided with improvement points that are later checked to ensure they have been carried out
  - the skills of middle leaders are developed to enable them to play a full part in securing improvements, especially by analysing and evaluating the performance of individuals and pupil groups within their areas of responsibility
  - governors develop a more in-depth understanding of their monitoring and evaluation role, especially in relation to how different groups are achieving.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to improve this aspect of leadership and management, including a review of pupil premium funding.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 27 to 28 April 2016**

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, two subject leaders, the chair of governors, three governors and a representative from the local authority. I also met with two consultant principals from the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust, who have been supporting school leaders since January 2016. I spoke with several parents at the beginning of the school day as well as pupils during their playtime. You and I observed teaching in all classes and looked at work in pupils' books. I considered documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching and reviewed your most recent information on pupils' progress and attainment. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated. I looked at a range of other documents including governors' minutes and the school's website.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the substantive headteacher has left and you have become acting headteacher until the school converts to an academy, which is planned for 1 September 2016. The leader of the early years left and was replaced by an early years class teacher. The early years is currently being led by an external consultant principal. The deputy headteacher has returned from maternity leave. Two teaching assistants have left, along with two lunchtime assistants. All of these positions have been replaced and a further two lunchtime assistants have been recruited to improve the ratio of adults to pupils at that time of the day. Two experienced local authority governors have been appointed to the governing body.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leaders have acted quickly to introduce a structured timetable for monitoring the quality of learning in every class. Through lesson observations and the scrutiny of work in pupils' books, leaders have identified strengths and areas for improvement for each teacher. Although the quality of teaching and learning is not yet consistent across the school, teachers are much clearer about how they can improve learning in their classrooms.

Two external consultant principals led the school very effectively in the months immediately following the publication of the inspection report. They have worked with staff and governors to identify and implement change in a manageable and timely manner. As a result, they are highly respected and trusted. They have provided invaluable support to the acting headteacher and this has enabled her to learn about her new role and become the school's key leader in a very short time.

However, the roles of subject leaders are still underdeveloped. Senior leaders have rightly prioritised improvements in the quality of teaching and learning following the previous inspection. In addition, the deputy headteacher has only very recently returned from maternity leave, thereby bringing the school's leadership back to full strength. Discussions with the literacy and mathematics subject leaders show that they have good subject knowledge and know what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching in their respective areas. Senior leaders are preparing to delegate more responsibility and accountability to subject leaders and know that this is an important next step in improving the school.

Governors have responded decisively to address the issues identified during the previous inspection. The chair of governors has led by example, showing a very strong commitment to improving the school and taking the necessary steps to make this happen. The structure of the governing body has been altered, with fortnightly meetings to ensure that the pace of improvement is maintained. The addition of two new and experienced governors, identified by the local authority, has considerably strengthened the range of skills and expertise on the governing body. Leaders are sharper at reviewing information about pupils' performance and using this information to inform their decisions. They share increasingly detailed information more frequently with staff and governors. Minutes from meetings show that governors are now much more effective in using the school's performance information to hold school leaders to account.

An external review of governance, including a review of the pupil premium, has not taken place, although one is planned for October 2016, in the event that the school does not convert to an academy before that time. However, the positive actions of the governing body since the last inspection provide strong evidence that it is having a significant impact on securing the improvements necessary to improve the school.

The school's current action plan is closely linked to the local authority's statement of action and both documents help leaders to improve the school at an appropriate pace. Leaders are aware that there is a risk that some deadlines and targets may not be met and are taking action to rectify this, in the knowledge that time is of the essence.

Safeguarding is effective. Safeguarding procedures and the recording of information intended to help keep pupils safe from harm is much improved since the previous inspection. Staff and governors have received training in recent months and understand potential risks such as child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Teachers now have a much wider range of information about pupils' abilities and their backgrounds. Leaders have introduced regular review meetings where they hold teachers to account for each pupil's progress. Teachers are not yet using information about specific groups, such as those in receipt of the pupil premium, effectively enough to inform planning and accelerate pupils' progress.

Teachers in all classes use the newly introduced marking and feedback policy consistently. This is raising the quality of guidance to pupils on how to improve their learning. However, teachers' identification of pupils' next steps is not yet sharp enough to ensure that there is appropriate challenge for all abilities. On occasion, where next steps are identified, these are not followed up over time and misconceptions or errors recur. Pupils' presentation of their work is not yet of consistent quality across the school.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Leaders have prioritised the implementation of a new behaviour policy that is designed to praise and reward pupils for good behaviour. This approach is having a significant impact in improving pupils' attitudes towards their learning and each other at different times of the school day. Leaders scrutinise information on pupils' behaviour in order to spot patterns or trends so that any concerns can be swiftly addressed. As a result, a very small minority of pupils now have personalised behaviour plans that are discussed with parents and reviewed regularly for impact.

The school now employs a family support worker who is also the designated safeguarding lead practitioner. She has quickly developed her role and plays a significant part in ensuring that pupils are safe from harm, with good evidence to show her impact. As a result of her direct contact with parents, attendance is improving and is currently in line with national expectations.

Classrooms are clean and tidy and leaders have begun the job of ridding the school of unnecessary clutter and out-of-date resources. Children in the early years are introduced to routines that ensure that their learning environments are safe, for example disposing of banana skins and milk cartons carefully during snack time.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

Current school assessment information and work in pupils' books show that pupils are making expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are ensuring that teachers have more opportunities to moderate and compare work against that of pupils in other schools to improve the accuracy of assessment judgements. Although not all assessment targets identified in the local authority's statement of action have been met, school leaders are satisfied that this is a reflection of previous inaccuracies in assessment. They are confident that teachers are increasingly accurate in their judgements of pupils' progress and attainment.

## **External support**

The school is receiving extensive support from the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust, an arrangement which has been brokered by the local authority. The two consultant principals have used their experience and expertise very effectively to kick-start improvements at the school. They are supporting the acting headteacher and the school's subject leaders as they gain experience in their roles and become more confident in leading the school. The local authority adviser makes regular visits to check on the progress being made by the school on its way to improvement. The local authority has also provided two experienced governors who have added considerable capacity, expertise and support to the school's governing body.