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Mr Peter Hardern
Netherfield Primary School
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Nottinghamshire
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Dear Mr Hardern

Special measures monitoring inspection of Netherfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 May 2017, 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 September 2016.

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 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 Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Di Mullan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in September 2016.

- Ensure that leaders and governors monitor the school's safeguarding processes and procedures closely, embedding a culture of vigilance in which all staff and volunteers know and discharge their duties effectively.
- Ensure that the school's policies and procedures are accurate, particularly in relation to the safeguarding of pupils, are understood by staff, governors, volunteers and parents, and are implemented consistently.
- Increase the levels of accountability and challenge placed on governors, leaders and staff to promote the best possible outcomes for all pupils and particularly those who are disadvantaged, the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Eliminate inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment, particularly, by:
 - ensuring the accurate and effective matching of learning tasks to pupils' abilities
 - improving the quality and quantity of opportunities for pupils to use and to apply their skills in reading and mathematics
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces and in a range of subjects
 - removing the pupils' over-reliance on adults to support their learning.
- Improve the outcomes for pupils urgently, particularly pupils who are disadvantaged, the most able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the impact of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, so that pupils are better equipped for their future lives in modern Britain.
- Raise rates of pupils' attendance and ensure that the systems for monitoring are effective in securing sustained, improved attendance.
- Improve outcomes in the early years by embedding effective assessment practices that include and involve parents successfully in the learning and development of their children.
- Improve the quality and impact of resources on children's learning and development in the early years.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 May 2017

Evidence

The inspector met with the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, and leaders with responsibility for reading, writing and mathematics. She also met with the leaders of the early years provision and the leader with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The inspector also held meetings with three governors and seven members of staff. The inspector spoke with pupils and held meetings with a representative of the local authority and representatives of the Greater Nottingham Education Trust. She spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and paid a short visit to the school's breakfast club. With school leaders, the inspector observed learning taking place in every year group. She examined a range of pupils' books from across the school. The inspector scrutinised school documentation relating to the progress that has been made in the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in September 2016.

Context

Since the inspection in September 2016, one teacher has returned from maternity leave and two midday supervisors have been appointed. There have been substantial changes to the membership of the governing body as several governors have left and eight new governors have joined it. The school is currently converting to academy status, with Greater Nottingham Education Trust as the proposed sponsor.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

At the time of the last inspection, inspectors raised concerns about safeguarding in the school. The headteacher acted swiftly and decisively to remedy this. Immediately following the inspection, a detailed audit of safeguarding provision highlighted areas where improvements could be made. The headteacher ensured that all staff received up-to-date training so that they all know how to raise a concern about a child's welfare. As part of the school's ongoing safeguarding programme, staff undertake additional training in specific aspects of safeguarding, such as child sexual exploitation and domestic violence, and training from the charity Stonewall. The acting deputy headteacher presents staff with 'quizzes' twice a week to check that their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding practices is accurate. Leaders have recently introduced a leaflet for visitors so that they are in no doubt about key aspects of school safeguarding policies, such as those relating to the use of mobile phones and how to raise a concern if they have one. The headteacher has provided staff with clear training in how to use the school's online system for recording concerns about pupils' welfare. He checks, at least weekly, that staff are using the system correctly. Leaders have secured the entrances to the

school and introduced badges for staff, governors and visitors to wear. Staff told the inspector that safeguarding now has a much higher profile in the school. Governors have undertaken audits of safeguarding each term to check that systems are robust. Leaders and governors have drawn up a list of policies to ensure that they are up to date. This was not checked last term, but the safeguarding policy is up to date.

There have been significant changes to governance since September 2016. Following the inspection, the governing body was due to be replaced with an interim board. This did not take place. The school's governing body subsequently reformed in January and commissioned the review of governance that had been requested at the time of the previous inspection. Eight new governors, carefully chosen for the range of useful skills they can offer, have joined the governing body since the inspection in September 2016. A new chair of the governing body has been elected. The delay in requesting the review means that governors have only recently begun to galvanise themselves to bring about the improvements that are required. Nevertheless, the governing body has rightly given a high priority to reviewing the structure of its committees, defining a set of expectations for governors' commitment and compiling a timetable of visits to the school so that it is better placed to hold leaders to account. Recently, the governing body requested, for example, that the headteacher provides his termly report well in advance of meetings and that he presents school assessment information in a particular format so that governors can ask more pertinent and searching questions.

The school's improvement plan contains all the elements it should and incorporates the areas for improvement from the last inspection. Leaders at all levels contribute to its ongoing evaluation to check progress towards its targets and identify further action that is necessary. The local authority's action plan has previously been evaluated by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and was found to be fit for purpose.

School leaders have not acted upon the findings of the review of the use of pupil premium funding that was requested at the last inspection. This should be remedied without delay.

Leaders are in the process of converting to academy status. Greater Nottingham Education Trust, based at Carlton le Willows Academy, has been identified as the sponsor academy. Leaders from the school and the chief executive officer of the trust are keen for the sponsorship to be complete as soon as possible.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The headteacher has provided training for staff in improving the quality of teaching. This led to a new whole-school policy on teaching and learning. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are using this to support their monitoring of the quality of teaching across the school. Their records show that there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since September 2016. Much of the teaching is now good,

but too many inconsistencies remain throughout the school. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and make effective use of questions to develop pupils' vocabulary and to explain ideas clearly to pupils. Teaching assistants provide carefully targeted support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to enable them to learn more effectively. Occasionally, teaching assistants do not promote learning well because their interactions with pupils are restricted to praise and encouragement, without offering sufficient challenge to pupils to improve their work further.

The leader with responsibility for reading has introduced a new system where pupils are rewarded for reading much more regularly. A significant investment has been made to increase the number and range of books available to pupils. Staff have spent time categorising the books so that pupils can choose from a range that is at just the right level for them. Pupils told me that they enjoy this new approach.

Encouraged by the headteacher's mantra, 'every child writes every day', teachers ensure that pupils throughout the school write at length across a range of subjects far more regularly. Pupils' books, particularly in key stage 2, showed that teachers are making strong links across subjects so that the purpose of pupils' writing is closely linked with their learning in other subjects. Pupils' topic books also showed that, in some classes, teachers provide pupils with opportunities to practise the skills they learn in mathematics when they are studying science topics, for example. Pupils' books throughout the school are neat and well presented, demonstrating that pupils are proud of their work.

In mathematics, teachers match the learning well to pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Older pupils choose work from three levels of difficulty, while younger pupils are directed to the level of difficulty that is just right for them. In some classes, pupils are too reliant on the adults. For example, sometimes pupils do not know what to do when they have completed the task that has been set and mark time while they wait for an adult to come and speak with them. Other pupils do not have a range of strategies to draw upon, other than asking an adult, if they are stuck. Pupils' books showed that, while there were several examples of pupils applying their mathematical skills, the opportunities for pupils to practise their problem-solving and reasoning skills vary too much throughout the school.

Leaders have invested considerable funds in new resources for the early years classrooms. Teachers have breathed new life into the area by organising the resources so that children can make their own choices about what they need to use to support their learning. The classrooms are bright and inviting for children with zones, known as 'labs', for the different areas of learning, such as writing and science. Teachers have paid great attention to detail, such as ensuring that the colours on the labels and notices around the room closely match the method teachers use to teach phonics. This helps children to read the labels and to practise the sounds they have been learning.

Teachers encourage children to tidy the resources away independently by marking the shelves to show where equipment should be replaced. Not enough has been done, however, to encourage children's independence. Routines are not well established as several children continued to play during tidy-up time. The teacher played music to encourage the children to join in with the tidying, but it was very loud and rather than calming the children and encouraging them to put equipment away, it appeared to have the opposite effect for some of the children present.

The early years leaders have revived the use of a published system to support assessing how well children have achieved and recording their progress. Leaders have reorganised staffing arrangements so that during any learning session one member of staff has responsibility for gathering information about how well children are doing. Teachers use this information to plan children's next steps in learning. During this monitoring visit, teachers were due to hold a meeting with parents to explain to them how they could contribute to their own child's assessments. Over recent weeks, the early years leaders have encouraged parents to share their child's successes at home by writing notes to the staff on 'Wow stars'. This has had limited success. One leader, who has recently returned from maternity leave, acknowledges that she is still at the early stages of involving parents successfully in the learning and development of their children.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils generally behave well in school and on the playground. In class, pupils are generally attentive, drifting off task only when they are unsure what to do next.

Pupils told the inspector that behaviour in school has improved this year. The oldest pupils recognise that staff are making effective use of systems, such as the reward points, to promote good behaviour.

Leaders and teachers have promoted pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well since the last inspection. Whole-school topics, such as 'International Week', have helped pupils to improve their understanding of world cultures, religions and civil rights. Pupils have studied a range of local and national issues at a level that is appropriate to their age, such as 'Brexit', and promoting a campaign locally for residents to clear up dog mess.

Leaders have rewritten their school attendance policy so that it aligns with that of Carlton le Willows Academy in preparation for the proposed conversion to academy status. At the time of this monitoring visit, pupils' overall rates of attendance were higher than at the same point last year. The attendance for disadvantaged pupils, however, has fallen even further behind the national average. Leaders hold weekly meetings to discuss pupils whose attendance is of concern. They make referrals to the local authority if they believe this to be necessary in improving a pupil's rate of attendance. Leaders are aware that they must tackle this issue more successfully as a matter of urgency.

Outcomes for pupils

At the time of the inspection in September 2016, the school had an underused system for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress. Since then, staff have received training in understanding and operating the school's system and in assessing pupils' attainment more accurately. Leaders hold focused meetings with teachers every half term to discuss the progress pupils are making. The headteacher has linked this to teachers' appraisals so that he can hold teachers to account for the progress the pupils make with greater rigour.

The school's assessment information shows that, so far this year, most pupils are making at least expected, and often good, progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In several year groups, the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making is even more rapid, indicating that they are diminishing the differences between them and their peers. The headteacher readily acknowledges, however, that many pupils make slower progress than they should and are still not working at the standard they should be reaching for their age.

The special educational needs coordinator uses the assessment system to plan and track the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, she can acknowledge, and build upon, the progress these pupils are making, even if the steps are small. She keeps a close check on the effectiveness of the interventions and support these pupils receive. Pupils are making better progress from their different starting points this year.

External support

The local authority has brokered useful support from a local primary academy. This has enabled many teachers and leaders to observe effective teaching. They have used this information to provide training for colleagues at Netherfield and to improve their own practice.

The local authority has undertaken an audit of safeguarding and monitored the quality of improvements that the school has been making since the last inspection, providing leaders with useful information.