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Mrs Kerry Lakin  
Headteacher  
Queen Mary Avenue Infant School  
Queen Mary Avenue  
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Lincolnshire  
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Dear Mrs Lakin

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Queen Mary Avenue Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 June 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

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

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good in all subjects, particularly English and mathematics, resulting in strong progress and improved attainment for pupils
- plans contain the precision needed to secure rapid improvement and enable leaders, including governors, to monitor and evaluate more sharply
- pupils' attendance is improved and the numbers of pupils regularly absent from the school is reduced.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, senior and middle leaders, and a group of governors to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I observed teaching and learning jointly with you and other leaders across all year

groups. I scrutinised pupils' work alongside the leaders of English, mathematics and the early years. I spoke to pupils about their learning and observed their behaviour in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. I also spoke to parents at the start of the school day. I reviewed school documentation including the school's improvement plans and evaluations of teaching and learning. Safeguarding information and records of pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance were also examined.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, there has been considerable staffing turbulence requiring the appointment of five new teachers. The departure of your deputy headteacher and subsequent temporary promotion of your new assistant headteacher have led to leaders taking on additional responsibilities. As such, it has been necessary to change the early years leader twice this academic year and several middle leaders are new to their roles. A new pastoral team has been created, including the appointment of a learning mentor and a safeguarding officer. Five new governors have been appointed.

## **Main findings**

At the previous inspection, you were asked to improve the effectiveness of middle leaders. Following this, you have created a team of enthusiastic middle leaders, many of whom were new to the school as well as being new to their leadership roles. In partnership with the local authority, a local school and external consultants, you have ensured that middle leaders have received appropriate training opportunities and support. As a result, they are developing their skills in driving improvements in their areas of responsibility. They demonstrate secure subject knowledge and are now able to articulate the strengths and priorities for their subjects clearly. Their confidence in improving the quality of teaching by holding colleagues to account is growing. Although early signs are positive, as many middle leaders are new to their role, it is too early to measure the impact of their actions on pupils' outcomes.

It was recommended, at the last inspection, that an external review of governance was conducted. This has taken place and governors are addressing the priorities identified through this process with suitable urgency. They are highly committed to improving the overall effectiveness of the school and have acted swiftly to recruit new members with the necessary expertise to support this. Although the school's improvement plans are fit for purpose, the desired outcomes included often lack precision. This means that governors are not able to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes thoroughly enough.

Leaders have ensured that appropriate interventions are in place to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils. For example, speech and language therapy, 'forest schools' and plastic construction toy therapy are all used with targeted pupils. However, because initiatives have only been introduced recently, it is too early for

leaders to evaluate the impact on disadvantaged pupils' progress. Therefore, leaders, including governors, are not yet able to evaluate whether pupil premium money is being spent effectively.

The last inspection report asked you to improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that pupils receive work which is suitably challenging. Supported by governors, you have tackled any underperformance of staff rigorously. In mathematics, leaders have introduced teaching strategies involving the use of physical resources and images to match activities to pupils' needs. Through this, teachers aim to give pupils a firm understanding of mathematical concepts, so that they can then challenge pupils to apply their skills and think in a more abstract way. Since this initiative is at an early stage of implementation, teachers are not consistently selecting the method which will stretch pupils most effectively. You were also asked to ensure that pupils have more opportunities for investigating and problem-solving in mathematics. Although some pupils are taught to solve problems and reason, this practice is not embedded across year groups. Leaders recognise that there is more work to do to ensure that pupils receive regular opportunities to develop these skills.

At the previous inspection, you were also challenged to improve the quality of teaching and learning in writing. To this end, leaders have made sure that pupils have more opportunities to apply their writing skills in subjects across the wider curriculum. Leaders have also introduced regular first-hand experiences which have inspired pupils to write. For example, learning about space inside a planetarium provided pupils with great motivation to write on the topic. Pupils' work shows that they are now making stronger progress with their handwriting, punctuation and word choices, and are building the stamina needed to write at length. However, leaders are aware that pupils' errors in basic writing skills are not always addressed. As a result, pupils' progress in writing is not maximised and too many pupils are not reaching the standard expected for their age.

Leaders have ensured that children in the early years have frequent structured opportunities to practise their early writing skills. Teachers are now effective in building up children's skills in small steps, adapting and removing scaffolds in response to children's progress. Consequently, children in the early years are starting to show stronger progress in writing. However, leaders are aware that these initiatives are at an early stage of implementation and, therefore, it is too early to measure whether children's progress is sustained over time.

Since the last inspection, you have focused on improving teaching, learning and assessment in all areas of learning in the early years. Leaders have made improvements to the quality of the provision and have introduced a more effective balance between the time given to child-initiated learning and that allocated for adult-led activities. Adults' assessments of children's learning are now increasingly accurate. Adults are beginning to use this assessment information effectively to plan activities which are more closely matched to children's needs. You acknowledge that

further work is necessary to make sure that activities are consistently offering children the right level of challenge to enable them to make stronger progress.

You have also focused your efforts on improving pupils' attendance. Absences are followed up rigorously and pupils understand the importance of good attendance. The incentives leaders have put in place are starting to have a positive effect, but it is too early to measure whether this improvement will be sustained. As a result, attendance remains below average and too many pupils are regularly absent.

### **External support**

You have secured a range of external support which has been crucial in securing improvements in leadership and, subsequently, in the quality of teaching. You have built valuable and successful partnerships with local authority representatives, who have effectively supported the development of middle leaders for English, mathematics, science, physical education and computing. Governors and leaders have benefited from working with a local authority partner on developing their understanding of pupils' progress and attainment information. An external consultant has provided specialist support for the mathematics leader. Working in conjunction with a local school, you have secured leadership support for yourself through a national leader in education, as well as enabling your staff to share in the good practice of the partner school. Vital support for leaders and staff in managing pupils' behaviour has been accessed through a specialist from a local alternative provider. Early years staff have developed their teaching and assessment skills through working with an external consultant.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for North East Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Karine Hendley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**