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Ms Lynsey Houstoun  
Headteacher  
Seven Stars Primary School  
Peacock Hall Road  
Leyland  
Lancashire  
PR25 1TD

Dear Ms Houstoun

### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SEVEN STARS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Anthony Pearson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 November 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education Standards and Inclusion at Lancashire County Council.

Yours sincerely

Garry Jones  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF Seven Stars Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 21 Nov 2007.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a group of governors, a number of teaching staff, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils.

### Context

There have been significant staff changes since the last visit. The local authority seconded a new associate headteacher to the school in September 2007, she has since been appointed to the substantive post which she will take up in January 2008. An assistant headteacher has been seconded to the school from June 2007 until the end of the summer term 2008. In addition a new teacher has been appointed to the school with responsibility for assessment and recording. A teacher previously seconded to the local authority returned to the school in September 2007. The coordinator of the Foundation Stage is currently absent on maternity leave and her post is being covered by a temporary teacher. The roll of the school has fallen to 148 pupils.

### Achievement and standards

Pupils enter the school with skills that are well below those expected for children of this age. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 remain below average. In the national tests in 2007 standards declined and were well below average and particularly low in writing. However, this was a small cohort with a very high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The standards achieved by pupils without an identified learning difficulty improved slightly on the previous year, although writing remained the area of greatest weakness. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards rose significantly in 2007 and were just below the national average. The greatest improvement was in English, where the standards were the highest achieved in five years. When their starting point is taken into account these pupils made progress that was above that found nationally. This represented a good improvement on the level of achievement in the previous two years. Achievement overall is now satisfactory. However, the school is aware that, although progress is improving, it continues to be inconsistent between different year groups. This, in part, is the result of the inadequate progress made in previous years.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- Improve standards in English – good

### Personal development and well-being

The personal development and well-being of pupils continue to be satisfactory. Better procedures for promoting and monitoring attendance have led to an improving

picture in the current academic year. Attendance is now close to, though still below, the national average. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around school, although there have been a small number of fixed-term exclusions. Two instances of racial harassment have also occurred since the previous monitoring visit; they were dealt with appropriately. Pupils with particular learning difficulties and/ or disabilities, for example wheelchair users, integrate well with other pupils in play areas and the classroom. Pupils enjoy the opportunities provided, for example in assemblies, to recognise and celebrate their achievements. Their involvement in the 'SEAL' programme is contributing well to their social development. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and trust their teachers to look after them. They enjoy taking responsibility. For example Year 5 pupils act as buddies for younger pupils, pupils in Year 4 make good use of their training in food hygiene by helping in the tuck shop and pupils from across the school are proud of their election to the embryonic school council.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The proportion of good teaching has increased slightly but there remains too much teaching that is satisfactory. One inadequate lesson was seen. There continues to be a need to ensure that the best practice in teaching is embedded across all classes and in all lessons.

The good teaching is resulting in pupils making good progress in lessons and developing more positive attitudes to learning. In the best lessons planning has improved and a range of suitably challenging tasks is provided to meet the needs of all pupils. There are precise learning objectives that are shared with the pupils and clear explanations of what they must do to achieve them. A positive development is the greater use of a number of different resources to match the abilities of pupils and this supports learning well. Teachers maintain a clear focus on the learning objectives by regularly reminding pupils of what they are trying to achieve. This maintains a brisk pace of learning. In these lessons pupils behave well and clearly enjoy learning together and independently. There is effective use of teaching assistants to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The provision for pupils with physical disabilities is particularly effective in ensuring that they are fully integrated into mainstream activities

The marking of most pupils' work has improved significantly and, at its best, provides detailed and useful advice to pupils on what they have to do to improve and reach their targets. A particularly positive development was when pupils were given time in class to respond to the teacher's comments. Pupils are well aware of their curricular targets, which are clearly displayed in classes and provide a clear focus for learning in the core subjects. Pupils also regularly use their individual writing targets, recorded in their exercise book, to remind them of the key point that they need to work on.

Where teaching is less effective, the learning objectives lack sufficient clarity to focus the pupils on precisely what they are trying to learn. In some lessons the planned activities do not provide appropriate challenge to all pupils, being either too difficult or easy. In these lessons the rate of progress slows and in some lessons a small

minority of pupils become distracted from their learning. In a few lessons the response of the teacher to challenging this inattention is not sufficiently prompt or robust.

The school has improved the cohesiveness of the curriculum as a result of its recent mapping exercise, the initial stage of a proposed whole-scale curriculum review. However, its implementation is too recent to allow its impact on pupils' standards and achievement to be judged. The curriculum continues to be enhanced by extra-curricular activities and extensions to the day-to-day provision, particularly by using the expertise provided by outside agencies and the local sports college, as well as making good use of expertise from within its own support staff, for example in the provision of Spanish lessons.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- Raise pupils' achievement by improving teaching and learning through the sharing of good practice and the elimination of unsatisfactory teaching – satisfactory

### Leadership and management

The appointment of a substantive headteacher to lead the school has had a significant positive impact on the morale and confidence of the staff. She has quickly built on the work of the previous associate headteachers to establish a rigorous system for monitoring the quality of provision and pupils' outcomes. There is an established calendar for the monitoring of planning, observation of teaching and work scrutiny. The results of this are establishing clear priorities for improvement across the school and for individual teachers. The involvement of subject co-ordinators in this work is spreading the responsibility and leading to a stronger feeling of accountability on the part of staff. The headteacher is well supported by the associate headteacher, who has taken a lead on literacy and on aspects of staff development, and by the newly appointed assessment co-ordinator. Although the improvement plan continues to drive change, there is an emerging vision for the development of the school beyond its current priorities.

The use of assessment data continues to develop well. Pupils' progress is measured each half term in core subjects, underachieving pupils are identified and, where necessary, strategies to improve progress are introduced. In addition the assessments are analysed to establish a system of layered targets for each class during each half term to address identified weaknesses. The analysis of progress is also being used to review and, where appropriate, raise the targets of individual pupils. This detailed use of assessment data to inform planning and teaching is ensuring that raising achievement is constantly reinforced as the key priority for the school.

An audit of the governing body in the summer term led to a thorough review of working practices and the rationalisation of the committee structure. The governing body has also been strengthened by the appointment of an additional governor by the local authority. The minutes of meetings indicate that the governing body is now

beginning to develop its role as a 'critical friend' to the school and to ask relevant questions on performance. This is a positive feature and strengthens the management capacity of the school. A regular contact, beyond formal meetings, between the governing body and the headteacher has yet to be established.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- Strengthen management and monitoring systems to ensure that initiatives are embedded in practice – good

#### External support

The local authority continues to provide valued support to the school through its advisers and subject consultants. The work of the monitoring and intervention team adviser has effectively supported the school in increasing the rigour of its monitoring procedures and developing the role of middle managers. Training and support for peer-coaching have been completed and this provides a useful tool for the development of teaching within the school. The governors' support service has provided valued advice and useful training to the governing body.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to disseminate the best practice in teaching to ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching between and within classes.
- Extend the role of the governors in supporting and challenging the headteacher through regular meetings between the headteacher and individual members of the governing body.