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Miss J Pugh
The Headteacher
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Dear Miss Pugh

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HUMBERSTONE
JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Lois Furness, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 December 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not 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 and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Pat Walsh
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF HUMBERSTONE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 11 and 12 December 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' books, and met with the headteacher, executive headteacher, senior staff, a group of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been several changes to the staff team since the inspection in June 2007 and the situation continues to be uncertain. The headteacher has received support from the headteacher and leadership team of the feeder infant school. The LA has very recently appointed a temporary executive headteacher who was the school's standards inspector. He has taken the overall responsibility for managing the planned actions and the delegated budget. There has been significant staff absence, Year 3 has seen several staff changes, and a teacher is leaving Year 5 at the end of the autumn term.

Achievement and standards

The school recognises that standards of attainment remain too low and that pupils' achievement is inadequate. In the most recent Key Stage 2 national tests, standards declined, continuing the poor performance of recent years. Most pupil groups underachieved significantly in 2007 and, whilst there were some gains in the performance of higher attaining pupils, too many pupils remained at levels that were below national expectations because they made slow progress or, in some cases, fell behind.

Inspection evidence shows there are wide variations in standards and in the progress that pupils make. The school has set itself challenging targets for the raising of attainment this year. However, pupils' work seen during the inspection indicates that if these targets are to be reached the school will need to accelerate the progress of pupils in Year 6 significantly. Even then, standards are likely to remain low because older pupils suffer from a legacy of underachievement from earlier years. The pupils' performance in writing is particularly poor. Much of their work is carelessly presented and is marred by inaccuracies in spelling and punctuation. The school has begun to track pupils' progress more systematically and to set targets to help pupils know what to do to improve. However, the impact of these measures has not yet shown in pupils' learning and the standards they attain.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2007:

- raise standards and eliminate significant areas of underachievement, particularly in mathematics and English – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils are friendly, polite and enjoy school. In the majority of lessons, they try hard to complete their work and mainly satisfactory behaviour was seen during the inspection. However, low level disruption to learning occurs when lessons are not interesting enough and pupils are not clear what teachers expect of them. Pupils say there are still some instances of bullying, as identified in the previous inspection, but they also say these are sorted out fairly by the adults in school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has not improved since the last inspection. Although there is a small proportion of satisfactory and good teaching, there is too much that is inadequate, resulting in many pupils making unsatisfactory progress. Monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place, but this has not had the desired effect of improving the quality of teaching which remains inadequate overall.

In the good lessons, teachers are clear about the intended learning and planning is good, resulting in activities that challenge all pupils. Expectation of the amount of work is good and time targets ensure lessons move at a good pace. Teachers encourage pupils to use 'checklists' so they can assess for themselves how well they are succeeding in their work. Pupils themselves say they find these useful. Teaching assistants are used satisfactorily to support pupils who have difficulty with their work.

These features of good practice, however, are not consistent. In many classes there is confusion between intended learning and the activity which pupils have to do. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously and the good aspects of pupils' work is identified, alongside guidance about how to improve. However, the impact of this guidance is not evident in pupils' work because it is not always followed up by teachers and, consequently, the pupils' progress is limited. Too many teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of, and poor presentation is too readily accepted.

Pastoral care is satisfactory. Pupils say they feel safe and this is because relationships are good. Academic guidance is weak. The tracking system is very new and although teachers record assessment information on a termly basis, the accuracy of this is not secure. There have been limited opportunities for staff to share work and agree on the characteristics of different levels of work.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2007:

- improve the overall quality and consistency of teaching in order to accelerate the progress that pupils make in lessons and over time – inadequate.

Leadership and management

The school has not improved sufficiently since its last inspection. The headteacher is not providing clear enough direction or taking decisive action to drive through change and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement quickly enough. There is still a long way to go to develop leadership capacity at all levels. The uncertainty in the arrangements for leading the school has led to an unacceptable delay in implementing the planned actions.

Monitoring is at an early stage of development and there is insufficient guidance for teachers on how to improve. The high turnover of staff has led to inconsistency in embedding improvements. Self-evaluation, although more accurate in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school, is not yet sufficiently rigorous. The feedback from evaluation is not being well used to improve practice in teaching and learning in particular.

Governors do not play an active role in self-evaluation and strategic development and are ineffective in holding the school to account for the low standards that pupils achieve. Nevertheless, the newly appointed chair of governors has an accurate understanding of what needs to be done and a strong commitment to improving pupils' achievement as a matter of urgency.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2007:

- strengthen leadership at all levels by developing robust school self-evaluation and effective improvement planning – inadequate.

External support

The local authority statement of action is comprehensive in its support for the priorities identified at the last inspection. The support for literacy and numeracy by consultants and the standards inspector has been effective in developing assessment and tracking systems. The LA has supported the school well in managing the turbulent staffing situation. However, the action taken to improve the leadership of the school and the quality of teaching and learning has had limited results. Local authority support in this area is inadequate. Given the slow start made so far, the LA should implement the planned challenge as a matter of urgency and, if needed, the intervention required to accelerate progress.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the school's leadership has the capacity to bring about sustained improvement in the standards and achievement of all pupils.
- Secure a stable teaching staff and eradicate weak and ineffective teaching by ensuring that all lessons are challenging and well paced.
- Ensure that assessment is accurate and that teachers use this information more effectively to plan activities that will meet the needs of all pupils.