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Mr J Tarpey
Humberstone Junior School
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Dear Mr Tarpey

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HUMBERSTONE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Following my visit with Jim Henry, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 March 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers (NQT) may be appointed subject to the following conditions. The NQT should be mentored in school by a teacher of proven high quality, and all NQT entitlements must be met in full. Appropriate internal and external development, support and induction must be provided.

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 second monitoring inspection: 12 and 13 March 2008

Evidence

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

Context

There have been further changes to the leadership and staffing of the school since the last monitoring inspection. The headteacher is absent and the LA Standards Inspector is the executive headteacher. A teacher has returned from maternity leave and a new appointment has been made in Year 3.

Achievement and standards

The recently revised database enables the school to regularly and systematically track the progress made by individual and groups of pupils each term. The tracking identifies those pupils meeting expectations and those falling behind. The data shows pupils to be making better progress since the last inspection and this is confirmed by the progress inspectors saw pupils to be making in the lessons visited. Standards and achievement, although rising, remain inadequate in spite of recent initiatives taken by the school because there is a significant legacy of underachievement. However, there are positive signs that this is beginning to change because teaching is improving and is satisfactory overall. Green shoots of improvement are evident in most lessons, where progress is at least satisfactory. In Year 6, pupils have reached broadly average standards in reading and made some gains in writing and mathematics because teaching for these pupils is good. Most teachers are making better use of the tracking information to plan work of appropriate challenge for pupils, which in turn is helping to accelerate the progress they make. However, this is not yet consistent in all classes and the pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 3 and 5, is patchy because there is not enough consistently good teaching.

Progress on the areas 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

Most pupils behave well and treat each other and their teachers with respect. During the inspection, pupils said that behaviour had improved and that they enjoyed school, especially the new activities at lunchtimes. Pupils generally show good attitudes to their work, but occasionally their concentration wanders when the pace of the lesson slows. They work well together, however some of the work in books is untidy and poorly presented.

Quality of provision

Regular and effective monitoring and feedback have resulted in improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, and this is a view supported by pupils. Teaching is variable across the school and is satisfactory overall. The school's monitoring information and the lessons seen during the inspection confirm that some lessons are good and the proportion that is inadequate has reduced. However, there is insufficient good teaching to eradicate the legacy of underachievement.

Relationships in lessons are good and whilst there is some evidence of low level disruption this is dealt with effectively. Teachers have worked successfully on improving their lesson planning and are focusing far more on what the outcomes of lessons should be. They effectively share with pupils what they are expected to learn in lessons, and this is now consistent across the school. However, the activities given to them do not always match the capabilities of all pupils. In some lessons the work set is too easy, resulting in slower progress for the more able pupils. Where teaching is effective pupils are encouraged to check their own progress and discuss their ideas with 'talk partners'. This gives lively pace to lessons and absorbs pupils in their learning, enabling them to make at least satisfactory progress. Where teacher led activities are too lengthy, the pace of lessons slows resulting in pupils losing interest and concentration, and achieving less well than they could. Teaching assistants are used successfully in lessons to support pupils' learning. Marking is improving and, where effective, shows pupils how well they have done and what to do to improve. Where it is less successful, it makes little difference to the neatness, completion or quality of pupils' 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 - satisfactory

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher has brought stability and strong leadership to the school and has worked hard to implement change swiftly. He has been instrumental in bringing greater focus and rigour to all aspects of the school's work. His commitment to drive up standards and improve pupils' achievement is reflected in the improved school ethos. School self-evaluation is accurate and strategic planning in the Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) pinpoints precise areas for development. The senior leadership team has a clear purpose and members are now working effectively as a team. They have an accurate view of what needs to be done and how the school should develop in the future.

The governors are developing a more positive strategic role in supervising the school's development. The chair of governors has been very effective in driving this improvement by her tenacity in implementing clear and urgent actions. This has resulted in planned governor visits to the school, the establishment of committees, and a more systematic approach to analysing a range of information. The governors now have a clear plan and timescale for their further development.

Subject leaders in the core subjects are increasingly competent in monitoring and evaluating a range of information and identifying appropriate priorities for improvement. Many of the planned actions are suitable but, as yet, these initiatives are at an early stage and have not resulted in a substantial improvement in standards, particularly in mathematics. Nevertheless, a more consistent approach to their work has resulted in better coherence and teamwork among the staff. There is a stronger sense of purpose, direction and ownership at all levels. There is now a greater and continued need to focus strongly on, and carefully monitor, what classroom strategies enable pupils to learn most effectively and improve standards and raise achievement. The school has some challenges remaining with the recruitment of permanent staff, which does impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and ultimately on standards. However, it has proactively tried, and is continuing to try, to recruit good quality staff to bring stability to the teaching force.

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 – satisfactory.

External support

Following the last visit, where the school was judged to be making inadequate progress, the local authority (LA) responded promptly, working with the executive headteacher and staff to provide effective support to bring about rapid change. This is particularly evident in the work of consultants in monitoring lessons, the training in lesson observation for middle leaders, and the mentoring for Year 6 pupils that has led to satisfactory improvement in some pupils' learning. The school has welcomed the work of the LA Primary Strategy consultants in supporting the development of successful teaching strategies and advice for improving pupils' behaviour. The school improvement adviser worked well with the school to devise the RAP and to sharpen the priorities for development.

Priorities for further improvement

- Sharpen the monitoring work of the school and focus very precisely on identifying and sharing the good practice that will lead to improvements in pupils' learning and achievement.
- Build further on improvements to teaching and learning by ensuring that the tasks given to pupils challenge all levels of ability.
- Continue to develop the staff team by recruiting permanent and suitably capable teachers.