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Mr J Mason
Headteacher
Belton Lane Community Primary School
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NG31 9PP

Dear Mr Mason

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BELTON LANE
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Sue Aldridge, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20-21 May, 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 may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BELTON LANE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 20-21 May 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff with key responsibilities, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The newly appointed deputy headteacher took up post at Easter. An experienced teacher has also taken over the Year 4/5 class. The school has had its Investors in people award renewed.

Achievement and standards

Year 6 pupils have recently taken their national tests but the results are not yet available. The school has consolidated its assessment system and tracks pupils' progress in English and mathematics regularly. This assessment information indicates that Year 6 pupils are close to achieving the targets set for them and reaching the national expectations for their age. The majority appear to have progressed by at least two levels from the end of Year 2. Much of this progress has been made in the last year and results from consistently good teaching. According to the school's data, pupils in Year 2 are also performing close to the targets set for them but just below national expectations. This pattern is similar in Year 1. This also reflects the quality of teaching in these classes. However, the school's data indicate that, although pupils in Years 3 to 5 have made some progress, they remain well below national expectations for their age. These classes have had several changes of teacher in the last year, a situation resolved by the arrival of new staff at Easter. Children in the Foundation Stage generally make expected progress according to the school's data. The progress of pupils overall reflects the generally satisfactory teaching observed on this visit.

There is no distinct pattern amongst those pupils making slower progress. In two classes it is mainly boys but in other classes it is both boys and girls. The school has used its assessment information well to identify the pupils who required further support to make progress. A broad programme of intervention support was put in place, led by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and a teaching assistant. The school's evaluation of these programmes indicated that most pupils made progress and that some made substantial progress. As a result, the programmes are now running for pupils in Years 4 and 5 who need to catch up with their peers.

In the lessons observed on this visit, pupils made generally satisfactory progress, and, in some cases good progress. This matched the quality of teaching they received. Where pupils' progress was slower, it was often because their basic skills,

for instance in handling numbers or written accuracy, prevented them from applying what they had learnt. These gaps in their earlier learning are currently a barrier to some pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 5, making the progress they require to reach their targets. The sample of pupils' work generally confirmed the accuracy of teachers' assessment.

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

- Raise pupils' achievement and standards considerably by the end of Years 2 and 6 in English and mathematics by improving significantly the quality of teaching, enabling all pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. – *satisfactory*

Personal development and well-being

Pupils enjoy school and appreciate the greater variety of learning opportunities now offered in lessons. Behaviour is at least satisfactory and often good. However, a minority of pupils find it hard to work together and take turns, particularly where teaching is less structured and lacks pace. Attendance is satisfactory, and the school does all that it can to improve this further. There is a reasonable range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, such as classroom monitors and playground leaders. The school council is actively seeking pupils' ideas for improving the playground. Pupils take advantage of the increased variety of sporting opportunities but are less healthy in their eating of snacks and packed lunches. Organisations such as the Red Cross help pupils to develop a satisfactory understanding of personal safety. Older pupils' economic well-being has improved as their progress in basic skills has accelerated and standards have risen.

Quality of provision

Senior staff, supported by the local authority, have worked hard to ensure that the school's agreed policies on teaching and assessment are applied. On this visit almost all the lessons seen were satisfactory and around half were good. This was an improvement on the last visit. The profile of teaching broadly matched the school's assessment information with slower progress in Years 3 to 5. The school acknowledges the priority to ensure that a greater proportion of teaching is good so that pupils are able to improve their basic skills and make at least expected progress.

The best lessons started briskly with rapid tasks to get pupils thinking, refresh their knowledge and highlight key skills. Teachers encouraged pupils to discuss their work and to try out ideas. Learning objectives were clear and pupils were expected to work independently and to apply what they had learnt. Teachers ensured that pupils worked on a task appropriate to their ability. Relationships were very good; pupils behaved well and worked hard. Teachers regularly checked that pupils understood the work. Pupils said that they found lessons more enjoyable than previously and that they undertook a wider range of activities.

In the less effective lessons, the objectives were often insufficiently specific and teaching lacked pace. Teachers talked for too long or set pupils on to tasks before they fully understood what to do. Pupils often struggled with independent work

because they had weaknesses in their basic skills which prevented them from completing the work correctly. In one lesson involving practical activities, pupils lost focus and did not listen carefully enough to instructions.

Effective monitoring and support for teachers have helped to improve the use of assessment in teachers' planning. Tasks were generally well matched to pupils' needs. However, in some lessons, work was planned that was suitable for the ages of pupils but not matched to their abilities, particularly where pupils did not have the basic knowledge and skills to complete the work independently.

The school's marking policy provides sound guidance for teachers, although there is still some variation in the quality of marking and feedback to pupils. In the best examples, marking is positive and informative, giving pupils a good idea of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve further. Occasionally, work is unmarked, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics. Older pupils are more confident about their targets than younger ones. Although there were good examples in Years 5 and 6 of pupils using success criteria to mark and evaluate their own work and that of others, there was no clear sense in other lessons of how pupils would develop and apply these skills.

Satisfactory progress has been made in developing the curriculum so that it is better matched to pupils' needs, more interesting and exciting. This progress has been better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2, where a lack of continuity in staffing has been a limiting factor. The newly appointed deputy headteacher will now lead this development. In Key Stage 1, teachers have planned together to link all subjects into themes. Visits bring learning to life and themed days and weeks continue to add interest and enjoyment. Evaluation of the first year's planning has led to the addition of further opportunities to develop pupils' multi-cultural awareness. The subject leaders for English and mathematics have monitored teachers' planning to ensure that all subjects provide opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their basic skills. However, opportunities for pupils to develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills are still limited, partly because there has not been a leader for this subject until very recently. Staff have worked hard to enrich pupils' experiences through links with outside organisations, such as museums, a National Trust property and local schools.

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

- Ensure assessment is accurate and always used to inform planning. – *satisfactory*
- Involve pupils in assessing their own work so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. – *satisfactory*
- Improve the curriculum to ensure that pupils encounter stimulating activities to sustain their interest and make sure that their developing needs are met through well-planned progression of knowledge and skills in all subjects. - *satisfactory*

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to set a clear direction for the school and to establish high expectations. Since the last visit, the school has been through the procedure for reaccreditation of its Investors in People status. In this process, staff confirmed their appreciation of the headteacher's clear vision for the school and very good communication skills. Several also commented on the improved morale and commitment amongst the staff. The headteacher and senior staff have continued to work through the school's detailed action plan, with a strong focus on the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement. There have been good and regular opportunities for staff to undertake relevant training and new staff have received prompt induction into school policies and practice.

The subject leaders for English and mathematics have extended their monitoring and evaluation to include observation of lessons. They increasingly feed back effectively on their findings to teachers and use the information to set targets for classes and refine action plans. The headteacher and senior staff have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching and areas for improvement. Progress in the development of other subjects, especially ICT, and the shaping of the curriculum at Key Stage 2 has been slower.

Leadership is now more widely spread than at the time of the inspection last summer. Other staff have taken on responsibilities, such as for intervention programmes, gifted and talented pupils, the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme and transition into the Foundation Stage. Many of these are in their early stages but those involved are enthusiastic. They report that they are given a clear direction, the freedom to innovate and sensitive support from senior staff. They also appreciate assistance from local authority staff. They recognise that they are still developing their roles and some have yet to undertake monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of provision in their areas.

The governing body continues to develop under the reflective leadership of the chair of governors and with important interventions from governors appointed by the local authority. Governors regularly review the school's progress against the action plan and key milestones. Increasingly, they ask staff searching questions. Some governors have made visits to the school in their link role with subject leaders, although these visits are at an early stage. Governors do not yet have the capacity to verify the performance of the school independently.

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

- Strengthen governance, senior and middle management by adopting a robust approach to self-evaluation, delegating roles and responsibilities and building the skills necessary for effective leadership. – *good*

External support

There has been continuing, effective support from the local authority since the last visit. A number of training sessions have taken place with a focus on assessment and planning. Subject consultants have also undertaken joint lesson observations with

the subject leaders for English and mathematics. Foundation Stage advisers have worked with staff on general practice and the moderation of assessments. The governors have received support in reviewing their training needs and analysing the effectiveness of their meetings. Governors appointed by the local authority continue to provide useful experience in reviewing the school's work.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the consistency of teachers' marking and feedback to pupils, including how pupils assess their own work and that of their peers.
- Develop the roles of the staff who lead on subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Ensure that governors have methods to establish for themselves the quality of the school's provision and progress on the key issues.