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Mrs S Ashe
Interim Headteacher
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Carrington Drive
Lincoln
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Dear Mrs Ashe

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hartsholme Primary School

Following my visit with Rosemary Eaton, Martyn Groucott and Cliff Blakemore, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 30 September and 1 October, 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 November 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*

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 Hartsholme Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 30 September – 1 October

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 21 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, key staff, groups of pupils, three governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in April 2008, there have been a number of changes in staffing. The substantive headteacher, who had been on long-term sick leave, resigned at the end of August. Governors are now advertising for a replacement. Three other teachers left at the same time. The interim headteacher, appointed by the local authority, continues to lead the school. She is assisted by an associate deputy headteacher, also provided by the local authority. One teacher returned from maternity leave at the beginning of this term and another returned from long term illness. Over the summer, improvements were made to the Year 5 and 6 areas of the school and to the outdoor environment.

Achievement and standards

The school now has a regular and effective system for recording pupils' performance in the core subjects and for tracking their progress at three points over the school year. The information from this process has been analysed in detail for each year group by the assistant headteacher. It indicates that, over the last year, progress was better in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. In addition, although the exact performance varied by class, overall, progress was slower in mathematics and writing and best in reading. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made at least similar progress to their peers. Boys often did less well than girls in writing but not in every class. Whilst the data show that pupils did improve between the first recording point in November and the end of the school year, their progress was, at best, in line with expectations. In some classes progress was below expectations. For too many pupils this still means that they are working well below the standards expected for their age.

The provisional results from national tests for Year 6 this summer, supplied by the school, indicate that there was a slight improvement on 2007. On this evidence, standards remain well below average, especially in mathematics and science which did not reach the school's targets. However, results in English were close to the target set for the school, although reading was considerably stronger than writing. The headteacher's assessment, based on the school's data, is that pupils' progress is likely to be similar to that in 2007, which was inadequate.

Teacher assessments for Year 2 pupils this summer show improvement on those for 2007, particularly in reading and mathematics, where standards were close to the average. However, standards in writing remained well below average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 was well below average. The headteacher considers that pupils' progress from their starting points was satisfactory.

Many children join the Nursery with skills well below the expectations for their age. Their understanding of language and ability to communicate are often especially weak. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) they reach the expected levels in several areas, in particular their knowledge of numbers for labels and counting. In the main, however, their skills are below expectations. Language remains the least successful aspect of children's learning, despite the good progress they make in other areas.

In lessons seen, pupils made generally satisfactory progress and good progress in just over a third. Pupils tried hard and followed teachers' explanations. However, when asked to work independently or to apply what they had learnt, important gaps in their understanding and weaknesses in basic skills often prevented them from making the rapid progress necessary for them to improve. They regularly required additional help from teachers or assistants. Weak motor skills and inaccuracy with pencil and ruler, and an inability to recognise parts of speech and to apply them in sentences are examples of gaps in basic skills which hindered progress in lessons.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and increase rates of pupils' progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6 – *satisfactory*.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are well motivated by 'Reach for the stars', the system introduced this term to promote good behaviour and are looking forward to the rewards they can earn. Although some pupils felt that their concentration was disturbed in lessons, behaviour is at least satisfactory and the majority of pupils follow instructions and settle to work promptly. A few lose concentration when the pace of learning slows or when teachers spend too long talking to the whole class. Pupils are not always happy about lunch times, when they report that play can be rough. Teachers are organising more activities to encourage pupils to use their energy productively. Pupils say that bullying does occur but they know how they should respond if they have any concerns. Attendance rates are slightly below average and are affected significantly by family holidays during term time. A small number of pupils have a casual attitude to punctuality, arriving late and missing learning opportunities.

Quality of provision

The school has continued to make satisfactory progress in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous monitoring visit. The majority of the lessons observed were satisfactory, and just over a third were good. There was no inadequate teaching.

There has been further improvement in the planning of lessons, with clear objectives and expected outcomes. Teachers routinely include assessment information in their planning and identify those pupils in need of additional support. Planning also includes guidance for pupils on what they should achieve in the lesson, but there are inconsistencies in how well teachers plan to ensure that all pupils are challenged at an appropriate level. Too often, pupils complete the same task with little differentiation other than adult help to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes set for them. In combination with weak basic skills, for some pupils this slows progress in lessons. As yet, teachers are insufficiently rigorous in drawing together and assessing learning during lessons. Teachers' marking provides 'stepped targets' to enable pupils to achieve the next stage of learning but their use is inconsistent. The review of the work of classroom assistants has resulted in better provision for many pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Pupils say that they enjoy learning more because teachers provide more opportunities for them to work independently and with others. However, the best practice has not yet been extended to all classes, with some teachers failing to identify expected outcomes from group work or to provide guidance about how pupils should work with others and learn from the experience. This results in a lack of development of speaking, listening and discursive skills.

Children are taught well in the EYFS and thoroughly enjoy learning. They are provided with regular opportunities to choose from varied and stimulating activities, helping them to become independent learners. Resources are labelled and are easy for children to find and use. Staff often intervene and pose questions skilfully in order to extend children's learning. The outside accommodation is still being developed to create clearly designated areas for different types of activity.

The school has recently undertaken a full review of the curriculum and the new provision places emphasis on developing pupils' learning skills. Teachers contributed to its implementation and have received some training. It has led to improved lesson planning and greater interest and enjoyment for pupils. This is because pupils better understand the links between subjects. Although the longer term planning is in place, the focus on how teachers will ensure they incorporate literacy and numeracy into other subjects is still developing.

Good leadership and management in the EYFS ensure that assessment information is analysed thoroughly and used well in order to modify the curriculum. For example, books and writing materials form part of popular activities such as the role-play fire

station, encouraging boys to practise literacy skills. Induction arrangements are sensitive and include visits to children's homes. As a result, after attending the Nursery for only a few weeks, children are settled, happy and learning well.

The arrangements to identify and support pupils who find learning particularly difficult have been reorganised and improved. A new system is in place to track these pupils' progress by measuring small steps in learning. The information gathered is used to set targets to help them to improve. The coordinator for this aspect of the school's work has developed suitable systems to monitor the quality of provision and pupils' progress. Structured programmes are used to intervene when pupils with less significant problems need a boost to their learning, for example, in literacy. Training is planned for the teaching assistants who carry out this work. The school meets current statutory requirements for recruiting staff to ensure that pupils are safe. There are satisfactory arrangements to promote attendance and punctuality.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good through the effective use of assessment information to match work more precisely to pupils' needs and by involving pupils more in their learning – *satisfactory*.

Leadership and management

The interim headteacher is very effective and has identified key issues for raising standards. Steps taken before the last monitoring visit have been consolidated. The associate deputy headteacher has brought greater expertise to the school leadership team and the assistant headteachers have increasingly focused roles and responsibilities. However, leadership skills, particularly at middle leader level, which were not well developed at the time of the last inspection, do not yet sufficiently promote whole school improvement. For example, the core subject leaders' newly acquired skills in data analysis are not yet helping to raise achievement and standards sufficiently throughout the school.

There is a timetabled programme of monitoring and evaluation activity, involving all senior and core subject leaders, including regular joint reviews with governors. The interim headteacher maintains a careful evaluation of the school's progress against the milestones set by the local authority. Her assessment of the quality of teaching is accurate and she has a very clear understanding of the school's weaknesses. With senior staff, she has identified that, overall, pupils' achievement is not yet satisfactory.

The leadership team now has more clearly defined individual areas of personal responsibility. They are developing greater whole school awareness of teaching, learning and professional development and, as a result, are starting to support colleagues more effectively. For example, the core subject leaders support teachers

in the process of setting targets for their pupils for the first time. Targets had previously been provided to teachers, giving them little personal influence or ownership. Teachers are not yet sufficiently experienced in monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress towards targets to create more individualised programmes. As a consequence, teachers' planning for pupils' specific needs remains variable in quality so that at the moment not all pupils are being effectively challenged.

All staff are involved in evaluating the overall effectiveness of developments through the creation of three 'change teams' addressing the school's main priorities for improvement. This sharing of responsibility and accountability is moving the school forward by encouraging a shared culture and commitment to improvement, but is a recent development.

School governance has improved significantly and individual governors are now much more involved in monitoring and evaluation. Governors participate in work scrutiny and learning walks, enabling them to hold the school to account more effectively. Governors are also paired with the core subject leaders so that they have an enhanced monitoring role. The results of this monitoring are fed back to the full governors' meeting and to staff. At the same time, as governor involvement and accountability has increased, several governors have resigned and there are currently vacancies to be filled.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the impact of leadership and management through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation – *satisfactory*.

External support

The local authority continues to offer effective support to the school. It has provided senior leadership, including the associate deputy headteacher this year. This has enabled the interim headteacher to widen the focus of improvement activities. Training and consultant support has assisted subject leaders, especially in mathematics, and has helped to establish the Improving Schools Programme (ISP) across the school. However, some training was delayed until this term, for instance in science and for teaching assistants on the delivery of intervention programmes. The local authority assisted in the funding of improvements to the upper Key Stage 2 area and outdoor security. These changes to the environment are appreciated by pupils and have made the buildings more attractive and serviceable.

School staff visited teachers in schools with very effective practice. In some cases, this led to support for individual leaders which has been effective in moving the school's practice forward, for instance in identifying and responding to pupils with specific learning needs.