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22 January 2015

Moira Hunt  
Uplands Junior School  
Melbourne Road  
Highfields  
Leicester  
LE2 0DR

Dear Mrs Hunt

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Uplands Junior School**

Following my visit with Phil Harrison, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 20–21 January 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester and as below.

Yours sincerely

Clare Cossor  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:  
[CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)
- The lead and team inspectors.

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014**

- Raise the quality of teaching so that pupils consistently make good progress, by:
  - demanding all work in lessons from all groups of pupils, particularly the most able and those who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium
  - monitoring pupils' progress closely and adjusting the work set to speed it up, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
  - making clear comments on pupil' work in lessons and in their books to show them how well they have done and what to do to improve their work
  - always making the best use of teaching assistants to help pupils make rapid progress.
  
- Improve pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by:
  - encouraging pupils to develop their ideas, and helping them to speak fluently
  - focusing on improving pupils' skills in reading with fluency and understanding
  - ensuring pupils understand how to work out calculations
  - strengthening teachers' skills in teaching mathematics.
  
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
  - when observing lessons, making rigorous checks on the impact of teaching on the progress different groups make
  - giving teachers clear and accurate feedback on the effectiveness of their lessons in improving pupils progress
  - providing suitable training, linked to specific targets, to improve the quality of teaching
  - improving the monitoring skills of subject leaders, particularly in analyzing data and using the results to bring about improvement.

Ofsted has made recommendations for actions on governance to the authority responsible for the school. An external review of the school's use of pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 20-21 January 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, and subject and phase leaders. Her Majesty's Inspector met with a representative from the local authority, Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a group of teachers. Inspectors visited classes, had informal discussions with pupils, observed playtimes and heard pupil read.

### **Context**

There have been further changes to the context of the school since the second monitoring inspection which took place in September 2014. The executive headteacher who had been appointed by the local authority to support the school until the end of the autumn term 2014 has now left. The new interim headteacher started in January 2015 following a short handover period in December and will be supporting the school for four days a week. The teacher who held responsibilities as special educational needs coordinator and designated person for safeguarding has resigned but is continuing to work on a part-time basis at the school. The deputy headteacher currently fulfils both of these roles. Three new teachers started in January 2015.

The local authority, in partnership with the interim executive board, is continuing to use its statutory powers to explore the conversion of the school to an academy.

## **Achievement of pupils at the school**

It is clear that attainment is slowly rising in reading, writing and mathematics in most classes and most year groups but not in all. This was confirmed during lesson observations, and by looking in pupils' books and talking to them about their work. However, in all year groups, attainment in mathematics is weaker than in other subjects. This is due to the considerable inconsistencies in the quality of teaching of mathematics. Where subject knowledge is poor, teachers are modelling mathematical operations inaccurately and making mistakes in their own calculations. The new interim headteacher has been swift to support the subject leader for mathematics in introducing a new policy for calculation. Workshops were held with families in the week prior to the inspection to make sure that parents are kept informed about the current approaches to teaching calculation in the school.

School data confirm that attainment and progress are still particularly weak in Year 5 classes. The headteacher is ensuring that additional support is being used to help pupils in these classes catch up quickly. It is too early to measure the success of these most recent actions.

School data in December 2014 confirmed that in comparison with the same point in time last year, more pupils in Year 6 are making accelerated progress. In Years 3, 4 and 6 there is evidence of quickening progress in reading and writing and mathematics. Teachers and pupils spoke to inspectors about the particular impact of guided reading activities on helping pupils read with more confidence and understanding.

The majority of teachers now have an accurate view of the learning needs of all of the pupils in their class. As a result, planning is better matched to the needs of individual pupils. Where this is not the case senior leaders are ensuring that individual teachers have a clear programme of support so that their teaching skills can be quickly improved. Recent school data show that pupils with special educational needs are making good progress. This is partly due to the better use of assessment but also to the increased expectations of staff. The sharper focus on the teaching of vocabulary and speaking and listening skills is benefiting all pupils and contributing to the gradual rise in achievement across the school.

Data also show that pupils supported by pupil premium (additional support provided by the government for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) are making good progress and in some classes outperforming other pupils. There is evidence from recent school assessments that they are making accelerated progress in reading and that gaps in attainment are closing faster in reading and writing than they are in mathematics. This reflects the areas of teaching which are currently strongest in the school.

During the inspection pupils were proud and confident to talk to inspectors about their learning. It is clear that although there is still much to be done, that the greater focus on mathematics and reading and writing over the past year is beginning to reap rewards. Pupils were enthusiastic to talk about how teachers help them with their work but also that teachers expect them to 'never settle for less than your best'.

### **The quality of teaching**

Examples of teaching seen during this inspection, as well as the school's records, show that standards are definitely rising. These improvements are strongest in Years 3, 4 and 6. However, inadequate teaching has not been eradicated and there is not enough consistently good teaching in all classes. As a result, the achievement of pupils in Year 5 and in mathematics across the school is still too low.

The improvements in teaching which have taken place since the last inspection are due largely to the tenacity of senior leaders in ensuring that the quality of teaching remains an absolute priority for the school and in the development of the roles of the subject leaders for English and mathematics. Since the last inspection a number of improvements have taken place which have directly contributed to the rising standards in teaching and learning across the school.

These have included:

- showing other teachers what good quality teaching looks like including having high expectations of pupils
- whole-school strategic plans for reading, writing and mathematics which identify key priorities, assessment processes and training requirements
- regular scrutiny of pupils work by senior leaders, phase leaders and subject leaders
- more challenging work and reading materials for the most able
- more creative and exciting approaches to teaching and learning
- a greater sense of accountability of all teachers and teaching assistants for the progress of all pupils
- introduction of a new marking policy which has brought about greater consistency in the way in which teachers make comments about pupils work
- staff training in the teaching of guided reading
- an intensive programme of staff development to improve teachers' skills in assessment and the teaching of reading and mathematics.

Systems which were introduced last term to enable teachers to plan together in year groups are beginning to help improve the quality of teaching across the school. During the inspection it was clear that the majority of teachers now have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. In the majority of lessons, teachers used a variety of interesting resources to provide a constant focus on developing the

fluency and confidence of pupils' speaking and listening skills. This was particularly evident in a Year 3 English lesson where pupils had recently been on a visit to the airport and in a Year 6 class where pupils were learning about the experience of soldiers in the First World War. In both lessons, teachers had introduced pupils to new and challenging vocabulary which pupils were using with confidence and understanding.

Where teachers' expectations are not high enough, teaching is weaker and the progress of pupils is too slow. Examples of this include:

- marking in books which does not correct spelling mistakes or grammatical errors
- poor subject knowledge
- lessons which do not challenge pupils and which result in them becoming bored and not trying their best
- ineffective management of behaviour and acceptance of silliness and lack of effort
- poor planning which does not use the skill of support staff effectively
- inaccurate letter formation and untidy handwriting by teachers

There are still too many instances where the agreed formats for planning and marking are not being followed consistently by all staff and this is slowing the progress of pupils. The lack of an up-to-date policy for reading is also contributing to the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Warm and positive relationships between staff and pupils have ensured that even during this period of prolonged staff change, there is a bright, calm and caring atmosphere throughout the school.

The behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to learning are current strengths of the school. Pupils are polite, happy and were very eager and proud to talk to inspectors about their work and their teachers. Pupils seem increasingly confident to share their ideas in class and this is a positive result of the greater emphasis from all teachers and support staff on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.

In a minority of classes, poor behaviour is still unchallenged too much of the time and as a result pupils are not making enough progress.

Attendance is getting even better because senior leaders have worked hard to tackle the persistent absence of a small number of pupils. The deputy headteacher is tenacious in her drive to work closely with families and where there is an issue with on-going absence she is quick to follow this up with face-to-face meetings.

Further improvements have been made to safeguarding procedures since the last inspection. Senior leaders have ensured that all staff are fully aware of the agreed systems to ensure that pupils behave safely at all times including dinner and playtimes.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The new interim headteacher has quickly established positive relationships with all members of the school community and gained the respect of staff and pupils. She has secured a clear understanding of the key priorities for the school and of the urgency to increase the pace of improvement in teaching and learning. The impressive and relentless work of the deputy headteacher continues to drive the work of the school forward and has provided essential stability to staff, pupils and families since the last inspection.

At the time of the last inspection the leadership team had recently been restructured and subject leaders for English and mathematics were new to their posts. Since that time they have shown what good teaching looks like in English and mathematics and as a result the majority of teachers are becoming much more effective. Since the last inspection subject leaders have become more confident in the leadership aspect of their work and are now in position to take a greater role in observing and directly challenging the classroom practice of colleagues. They have now identified the key areas of work which need to be done and presented these in strategic plans for all staff. However, current plans do not link closely enough with the overall school improvement and assessment cycle.

Teachers told the lead inspector that staff morale has risen since the arrival of the new interim headteacher. They have welcomed an increased leadership presence in school and are pleased that previously agreed timelines for reviewing the school policies for mathematics and reading have been brought forward as a matter of urgency.

Leaders have implemented a wide range of monitoring systems and actions since the last inspection both in terms of checking the quality of teaching and also in analysing the achievement of pupils. The new headteacher has been quick to introduce a second pupil progress meeting each term to make sure that teaching is always well matched to the needs of different groups of learners and that the pace of achievement is accelerated. All staff now follow the agreed systems for monitoring and checking pupils' progress but not all are sufficiently accurate in their assessments and need further training to improve their skills. Senior leaders visit classes each day, carry out focused learning walks every week and check the quality of marking regularly. However, the quality of documentation and school improvement planning remains too poor. There are too many different plans which do not link together or show clearly enough when specific actions should be

completed and this is hindering the speed of improvement. It also means that the time of senior leaders is not deployed as efficiently as it needs to be at this time of rapid change.

All senior and subject leaders have an accurate view of the achievement of different groups of pupils and this has informed recent decisions about the appointment and deployment of teaching and support staff. As a result, the work for pupils in intervention groups is more sharply focused.

The majority of staff have risen to the challenge of the increased expectations from leaders. There is now a culture in school where everyone understands that poor standards will not be tolerated and that the needs of pupils drive every aspect of school improvement. However an effective formal system of performance management has still not been fully implemented and as a result, essential training, support and challenge for teachers and support staff are not as coordinated as it needs to be.

The external review of the use of pupil premium which was recommended at the section 5 inspection was carried out on 19 January 2015. Clear recommendations have been made but the school has not yet had time to respond to these.

The interim executive board provide skilled support and challenge to the school. Its members have ensured that the recent change in headship has been managed as smoothly as possible. They have continued to work in close partnership with the local authority and senior leaders at the school to ensure that the relentless drive for improvement is sustained. Since the last monitoring inspection they have ensured that there is more rigorous leadership of safeguarding but have not checked that all aspects of this role are being carried out. They are making sure that the necessary activities being undertaken to consider the future of the school are not detracting from the current urgency for school improvement.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to work effectively with the school. They have an accurate view of 'where the school is' on its journey of improvement. External consultants have effectively supported subject leaders in developing their roles and in delivering training across the school to improve teaching skills in English and mathematics. The local authority has ensured that a recent review of the use of pupil premium has taken place and that steps for action have been identified as a matter of priority.

**Once the school has had 24 hours to report any factual inaccuracies**, the post-inspection letter is copied as appropriate to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- For the Secretary of State use the following email address:  
[CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)
- The lead and team inspectors.

**The letters should also be copied electronically to each member of the inspection team.**

**A copy with editing marked up should be forwarded to the lead inspector.**