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6 December 2010

Ms Andrea Rice  
The Acting Headteacher  
Chestnut Avenue Nursery School  
Magnolia Avenue  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX2 6DJ

Dear Ms Rice

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Chestnut Avenue Nursery School**

Following my visit with Crystal Gail Robertson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 22 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2010. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Newly Qualified Teachers may not 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Devon.

Yours sincerely

Michael Burghart  
**Additional Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring senior managers and all staff are fully trained in the Early Years Foundation Stage by December 2010
  - ensuring senior managers and all staff are sufficiently trained and able to use the school's assessment, monitoring, recording and tracking systems effectively by December 2010
  - improving systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning to ensure there is a clear identification of aspects that need to improve
  - improving systems for analysing data about children's progress to identify the areas for development for learning and ensure equality of opportunity
  - improving the effectiveness of the governing body in monitoring and challenging the school to improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and children's achievements by:
  - improving planning of activities to ensure provision is tailored to meet the children's interests and needs and is clear about the skills and knowledge they will gain
  - improving assessment to more accurately record the skills and knowledge children have gained.
- Ensure that the progress and achievement of all children is at least satisfactory by December 2010.
- Raise the level of teaching and learning so they are at least consistently satisfactory by October 2010.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Chestnut Avenue Nursery School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 22 November 2010**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, parents, two members of the governing body including the chair, and two representatives from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the last inspection the headteacher has resigned and has been temporarily replaced by an experienced headteacher on secondment from another school. Two additional governors, appointed by the local authority, now support the governing body. Several governors have resigned. Some have recently been replaced, but there are still four vacancies. The Nursery, hitherto managed as part of the adjacent children's centre, is now run as a separate entity. One member of the teaching staff left the school at the end of the summer term. This vacancy has been filled with a long-term supply teacher who is set to become a permanent appointment. Another teacher has resigned with effect from the end of December. Applications are being sought to bring staffing up to its full level.

Although they frequently move from one area to another, children are now organised into two teaching groups, each led by a teacher supported by early years assistants. Following a local authority review it was decided that the Nursery will remain open. Currently, consultation is in hand with a view to a possible federation sometime in 2011 with a local primary school.

#### **Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning and other relevant pupil outcomes**

These aspects were not the main foci of this visit but observations show that strengths in children's personal development have been sustained. Children behave well and show positive attitudes. They concentrate well. Relationships are good and there are lots of examples of taking turns, sharing and showing consideration. Parents, carers, staff and children say that this continues to be a happy nursery school. They report a variety of improvements, for example in the stimulating and very attractive displays that now illustrate the curriculum and celebrate what children have done. First-hand observation indoors and out indicates that children very much enjoy the Nursery. In discussion, parents commented that this has been enhanced this term with children eager to tell them what they have done in school. There is evidence of the positive impact of new planning and organisation, with children better challenged at their own level, making better progress and feeling more fulfilled.

Children were observed actively choosing to be involved in writing activities, responding well to the encouragement of staff who make a conscious effort to show that they value any attempts to put marks on paper. There are positive indications that this is supporting the early stages of emergent writing. Staff, parents, carers and officers of the local authority all note that this is another example of distinct improvement this term.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that the progress and achievement of all children is at least satisfactory by December 2010 – satisfactory.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Since September 2010, planning, found particularly lacking in the last report, has been completely replaced and now meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Ongoing staff training is having a satisfactory impact on teaching, with children making better progress as a result of a more systematic approach. Although this is yet to be fully understood by all staff, leaders ensure that there is sound educational reasoning behind all activities. The now clear, well-communicated planning shows staff how to build learning on what children already know, can do and understand. Consequently, expectations of what is required of the staff, and what children are capable of, have been raised and children's achievement is beginning to more closely match their abilities. However, the legacy of gaps in knowledge and skills means attainment and progress remain well below what is expected. Teaching and learning as seen in lessons are satisfactory, which indicates substantial improvement. Staff organise and monitor activities appropriately and there are good examples of adults working effectively with small groups of children indoors and out, developing children's speaking and listening skills by virtue of dialogue. Good examples were observed in support for children who speak little English and in a session introducing children to the music and customs of Divali.

Progress in developing the use of assessment of children's progress and skills is good. New systems to measure and record how well children are doing, as well as their level of involvement in activities, are proving successful in identifying what needs to happen next. Although it is too soon to see the full effects of this, there are indications that work is being prepared and delivered at different ability levels and that staff are far more aware of the needs of individual children than noted in the last inspection. Targets and secure records of children's success rates are starting to be used to gauge progress. This forms the basis of communication among staff, with parents and carers, and, where appropriate, with outside agencies. These improvements are underpinning the good support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Such needs are identified early and this leads to much improved progress. Particularly good links with Nursery Plus staff are having a very

positive impact on the way children with marked learning and personal developmental delay are supported and integrated.

With common planning for morning and afternoon sessions now providing similar levels of interest and challenge, the weakness in providing equality of opportunity for all children regardless of when they attend has been overcome.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and children's achievements by:
  - improving planning of activities to ensure provision is tailored to meet the children's interests and needs and is clear about the skills and knowledge they will gain – satisfactory
  - improving assessment to more accurately record the skills and knowledge children have gained – good.
- Raise the level of teaching and learning so they are at least consistently satisfactory by October 2010 – satisfactory.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The school continues to ensure that children are well cared for and kept safe. The overall good progress it has made since it went into special measures is heavily dependent on the leadership and management of the newly appointed acting headteacher. She is having dramatic effects on the quality of provision and its impact on children's learning. She has galvanised the staff and, through an outstanding evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, given the setting much needed educational direction. Improvements to day-to-day and lesson planning have followed rapidly on the creation of a comprehensive whole-school development plan which has been well communicated to all. Satisfactory progress in governance means governors, well led by the new chair, are better informed and in a position to challenge in order to ensure that staff are held to account. The overall effect of improvements to leadership means that expectations of the staff and children are much higher. Good monitoring by the acting headteacher, well supported by the local authority, and a programme of staff training have resulted in activities now rooted in better knowledge and understanding of the six areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. For some staff, this realisation has come more slowly than for others, but the arrival of the acting headteacher and another teacher new to the school has provided good role models. Discussions with some staff indicate that the generally held view that the school did not deserve to be in special measures, having been outstanding in 2006, is being overcome with a better appreciation of just how far it had fallen short of expectations. Throughout, there is an increased appreciation of the educational as well as personal and pastoral benefits of learning through play.

New assessment procedures, with teachers and assistants collecting and recording how well children are doing, is providing a suitable database to prompt improvements. The acting headteacher has a good understanding of how to analyse such information but staff are not fully aware of how to use this process to drive improvements.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring senior managers and all staff are fully trained in the Early Years Foundation Stage by December 2010 – satisfactory
  - ensuring senior managers and all staff are sufficiently trained and able to use the school's assessment, monitoring, recording and tracking systems effectively by December 2010 – satisfactory
  - improving systems for checking the quality of teaching and learning to ensure there is a clear identification of aspects that need to improve – good
  - improving systems for analysing data about children's progress to identify the areas for development for learning and ensure equality of opportunity – good
  - improving the effectiveness of the governing body in monitoring and challenging the school to improve – satisfactory.

### **External support**

The school is well supported by the local authority. Regular visits and the provision of training have benefited leadership and management and served to enhance staff skills and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. A major success has been in arranging for the secondment to the Nursery of the acting headteacher. Reassuringly, this is now to be extended to the end of the 2011 school year. This has been complemented by the availability of good advice and practical support, particularly valuable in making appointments and helping in the move towards federation.

Although at first requiring some clarification concerning aspirations for the quality of teaching, the local authority statement of action is proving effective in mapping out the school's journey out of special measures. It contains appropriate time deadlines and costings, and itemises responsibilities, while highlighting success criteria. It demonstrates a good partnership between the authority and the school.