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10 December 2010

Interim executive headteacher
Mrs Rebecca Kingsland
Siskin Junior School
Nimrod Drive
Rowner
Gosport
Hampshire
PO13 8AA

Dear Mrs Kingsland

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Siskin Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2009. 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.

Progress since the previous monitoring visit – good.

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 the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan
Additional inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2009

- Raise attainment and strengthen progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the consistency of teaching through rigorous monitoring and evaluation to urgently raise the proportion of good lessons.
- Significantly improve lesson planning so that by the end of the autumn term, the work provided for groups of pupils consistently matches their ability.
- Strengthen the involvement of governors in monitoring the work of school and staff in the evaluation of improvement.
- Ensure that plans for improvement are sharply focused on key issues, contain clear measures to help evaluation of the success of changes made, and are clearly understood and implemented by all staff.

Special measures: monitoring of Siskin Junior School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 30 November 2010

Evidence

Over one day, the inspector observed the school's work, visited lessons in all four year groups and an assembly, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, pupils and staff as well as a representative of the local authority.

Context

There have been a number of important changes in the context of the school since the last monitoring visit. The outcome of the public consultation over the federation of Siskin with the adjacent infant school was positive and both schools formally federated on 29 November 2010. The interim executive body has now been disbanded and a joint governing body constituted for the federation. It holds its first meeting on 30 November 2010. Previously, the school had difficulty in recruiting parent governors. Three have already been appointed to the federation governing body, as has the new manager of the Children's Centre. The local authority is in the process of seeking a permanent executive headteacher for the federation. The school roll continues to fluctuate because of the regeneration programme for the area, involving both the refurbishment and rebuilding of the housing stock.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The most recent checks on the pupils' performance in English and mathematics show a gradual but steady improvement in the pupils' attainment. The interim headteacher has been very robust in ensuring that the information is based solidly on valid classroom assessments. She has, for example, instituted further investigations of the current Year 5 data to confirm their accuracy. On the basis of the present assessment information, 72% of Year 6 are on track to make two levels of progress in English and 76% in mathematics from their well-below-average starting points at the beginning of Year 3. This is a considerable improvement on the same time last year and indicates satisfactory progress, as confirmed by the latest official statistics for the school. The school is confidently predicting that 65% of Year 6 will gain Level 4 in English and 75% in mathematics. Writing still remains a weakness and there are carefully managed interventions in place to bring about improvement. Reading ages have improved because of the highly structured guided reading programme. Nevertheless, attainment in the current Year 3 remains low, with many pupils at the early stages of reading, despite the well-considered support in place. This is the result of a legacy of low achievement from Key Stage 1.

Progress across year groups is more even than at the time of the last monitoring visit and underachievement is recognised and dealt with rapidly. The most noticeable



change since the last monitoring visit is the eagerness of the pupils to learn and their clear enjoyment and excitement in much of their learning. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to be very well supported both in the mainstream classes and in special intervention groups. There are good exit strategies to take pupils off the register of special needs as they make up previously lost ground. As a result, the proportion of the pupils noted as having special educational needs and/or disabilities has fallen by 13% compared with last year.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise attainment and strengthen progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance levels for the academic year so far appear below average but this is mainly because of the school's strategies to organise individual intervention packages, some of which are part-time, for a significant number of pupils. Following the lengthy summer break, a group of pupils found it very difficult to settle back into the school and this resulted in seriously disturbed behaviour from a few. Effective interventions by the school and the local authority have supported many of these pupils so that overall behaviour in the school has improved. On this visit, it was generally good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly positive and they engage enthusiastically in their tasks. The majority are cheerful and happy to be in school.

The effectiveness of provision

On this visit, no inadequate teaching was observed. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching, with a greater proportion than at the last monitoring visit that is good. The local authority support in helping to improve teaching has been highly effective. Teachers and teaching assistants are generally confident in their organisation and in the way they carefully match work to the needs of groups of pupils. Of particular note is the way the pupils are learning to communicate their ideas to each other and to explore concepts together. There is now a far greater emphasis than previously on applying basic skills to problem solving and to working independently. This was very clear in a mathematics lesson on finding fractions of quantities in the context of space travel. Pupils were increasingly confident in working with word problems but also excited that they would be able to use both their mathematics and English in a baking session in the afternoon. Classrooms remain calm and orderly and relationships between pupils and staff are very good. Learning support assistants are very well deployed. Their effectiveness was clearly demonstrated in the carefully structured guided reading sessions observed.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:



- improve the consistency of teaching through rigorous monitoring and evaluation to urgently raise the proportion of good lessons – good.
- significantly improve lesson planning so that by the end of the autumn term, the work provided for groups of pupils consistently matches their ability – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The partnership between Siskin and another local school is now very effective in helping to improve the pupils' learning. Leadership skills within the school have improved because of the close partnership between the senior teams. The interim executive headteacher has raised the morale of the staff, who are now determined to do the best for the pupils in their care. The local authority has responded favourably to her requests for support in increasing the capacity of the school to improve. The impact is clearly seen in the improvements in teaching and learning throughout the school. With the formation of the federation governing body, the interim executive board has been disbanded. Areas for improvement are clearly understood at all levels of the school and interventions are well formulated to ensure success. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- strengthen the involvement of governors in monitoring the work of school and staff in the evaluation of improvement – good.
- ensure that plans for improvement are sharply focused on key issues, contain clear measures to help evaluation of the success of changes made, and are clearly understood and implemented by all staff – good.

External support

The school continues to receive reliable evaluations of its performance from local authority colleagues. Support from consultants has been particularly helpful in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in dealing with very challenging behavioural issues among a few of the pupils. The local authority has charted a clear pathway for the future of the school and has provided the resources needed for successful outcomes to its planning.