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8 December 2010

Mr A Meredith
Acting Headteacher
Ernesettle Community School
Biggin Hill
Ernesettle
Plymouth
PL5 2RB

Dear Mr Meredith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Ernesettle Community School

Following my visit with Mary Usher-Clark, additional inspector, to your school on 23 and 24 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 are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgement is set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

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 Plymouth.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - raising attainment through more challenging, focused teaching
 - promoting faster progress in lessons through ensuring better pace and that activities are appropriate for pupils' capabilities
 - providing consistently clear advice to pupils about the next steps in their learning.

- Develop the capabilities of leaders and managers by:
 - using information from self-evaluation more rigorously to address areas of weakness
 - ensuring the governing body monitors the school's performance systematically, raises its awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and provides greater challenge.

- By September 2010, improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing accurate assessment that will inform better planning and teaching
 - using resources, including staff, to ensure children initiate and extend their learning, both indoors and out
 - establishing coherent leadership and management to ensure consistently good practice in this key stage.

Special measures: monitoring of Ernesettle Community School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 November 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher and other staff, three governors including the chair and vice-chair, a senior adviser from the local authority, a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6, the parent champion and another representative of parents and carers.

Context

There have been significant changes in the leadership of the school. Following the inspection in May 2010, the headteacher and the chair of the governing body resigned. An interim headteacher led the school for the summer term and an acting headteacher is in post for the 2010/11 school year. A new chair of governors has also been elected. The governing body is preparing to make a permanent appointment to the headship next term. There have been some other important changes in staffing. A new head of the Foundation Unit, initially seconded to this role, has been appointed and a new assistant headteacher has also taken up her post.

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

Although unvalidated test results in 2010 indicate better progress by Year 6 since they were in Year 2, this is not reflected in the school's assessments of current pupils nor in lessons observed and in pupils' books examined by inspectors. Pupils' attainment overall remains below, and in some cases well below, standards expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is evident in pupils' work this term, but the school is unable to provide secure data on the progress made by pupils since the inspection as there are problems with the reliability and accessibility of previous assessment information.

The acting headteacher and staff have worked hard together to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A new class structure has been introduced to enable teachers to plan in teams and a new format for lesson planning places considerable emphasis on tailoring activities to pupils' varying needs in order to accelerate progress. All staff have had the opportunity to observe good practice in other local schools and school leaders are monitoring the impact of actions taken through checking planning and pupils' work, as well as observing teaching and learning in the classrooms. New approaches to marking pupils' work have just been introduced and early indications are that pupils are finding these helpful.

These actions are starting to bear fruit in lessons. Some good teaching was observed with a brisk pace and activities that met pupils' need well. Pupils behaved well and enjoyed much of their work. However, learning proceeded more slowly where some

satisfactory teaching was observed and opportunities were missed to extend pupils' understanding. Although teaching is improving, there has not been time for improvements to have had a significant impact on past gaps in pupils' learning.

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

- improving pupils' achievement – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The school is a polite and orderly community. Pupils' behaviour remains good and their attitudes are positive. Pupils get on well together in classrooms and around the school. Pupils interviewed clearly like school and spoke positively of the new approach to marking and of the targets they are set.

The effectiveness of provision

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is much improved. The new leader of the Foundation Unit has a clear vision for its further development and she has had a significant impact since the start of this term. The Reception and Nursery classes now form a coherent unit and there are clear and well-considered approaches to assessing children's progress which is recorded in the 'learning journey' documents. Children benefit from a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning and accommodation has been reshaped to support a good free flow between indoor facilities and the large outdoor area.

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

- improve the Early Years Foundation Stage – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting headteacher is strongly committed to the school and his ambitions for its rapid improvement are widely shared by the staff. Good plans set out actions to improve the school in some detail and their impact is being monitored closely. Leadership is being developed at all levels, with a new core school leadership team and a more extended team, where responsibilities and accountabilities are clear throughout. A new approach to gathering information on pupils' progress has been established, with a clear schedule of what needs to be done across the year. Action has been taken to ensure that teachers' assessments are more accurate, although more remains to be done to moderate work, both within the school and in partnership with other schools. There is an increasingly firm grasp of the weaknesses in pupils' skills and understanding that need to be tackled.

The governing body is strengthening its capacity to challenge the school and governors are more confident in holding leaders to account for pupils' performance. Currently, a more consistent approach to recording governors' visits to observe the school in action is being finalised and there is a clear programme for the further

development of governors' skills, knowledge and understanding during the current school year.

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

- develop the capabilities of leaders and managers – good.

External support

The local authority has provided good support and acted promptly following the inspection to secure the leadership of the school, initially for the summer term and then for 2010/11. It is supporting a partnership with a local outstanding school that is bringing valuable additional help to the school at all levels. The local authority's statement of action did not fully meet requirements initially but has been suitably amended to provide clearer measures to judge improvements in pupils' progress. Progress is being monitored through regular review meetings and a recent visit by a team of advisory staff. Additional time for the School Improvement Partner to support the school is being provided.