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Mrs V Arbon
Headteacher
Talbot Combined School
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BH12 5ED

Dear Mrs Arbon

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Talbot Combined School

Following my visit with Howard Dodd, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7–8 December 2010, I am writing on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

No Newly Qualified Teachers are to be appointed without the consent of the lead inspector.

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 Dorset.

Yours sincerely

Susan Gadd
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement through rigorous systematic approaches by: establishing reliable, accurate assessments in all year groups; use information from assessments to plan lessons and adapt work to match the needs of all year groups of learners; ensure that pupils receive useful advice and guidance about how to improve their work.
- Improve all aspects of leadership and management by implementing the current plans put in place by the affiliated headteachers, particularly as they relate to: developing management capacity through the school; the monitoring and evaluation of teaching; and the performance of staff to include informative feedback.
- As a matter of urgency, ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory duties relating to safeguarding.
- Improve provision, management and outcomes of the Early Years Foundation Stage by: developing management capacity in the Early Years Foundation Stage; ensuring that a strong well-resourced Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is provided; improving the quality of teaching and assessment and making sure pupils are safe at all times.

Special measures: monitoring of Talbot Combined School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 7–8 December 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited 13 lessons, scrutinised documents, pupils' work and met with the affiliated headteacher, other staff including members of the senior and middle management team, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, there have been four new teachers appointed, one of whom is a newly qualified teacher. In addition, new governors have also been appointed to the governing body. Since September 2010, the school is now being led by one affiliated headteacher who will remain with the school until July 2011.

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

- Children now enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with those skills broadly expected for their age, except in calculating, writing and linking sounds and letters, where their skills are below those expected nationally. As a result of significant improvements since the last monitoring visit, children in this part of the school are now beginning to make satisfactory progress in Reception.
- The unvalidated data at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2010 indicate a significant improvement to previous years. Pupils achieved well in mathematics and satisfactorily in English. Attainment improved in English with significant improvements in mathematics such that overall attainment for this group of pupils was above average. However, attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 continued to decline significantly and was below average overall and in writing and mathematics.
- As a result of the changes since the last monitoring visit, lesson observations indicate that in Years 3 to 7 progress is beginning to accelerate so that progress for most is satisfactory and for a few is good. However, this picture of improving progress is not reflected in Key Stage 1, where progress for too many is inadequate. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to those of their peers.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

- Since the last monitoring visit, improvements in behaviour were very evident in lesson observations from Years 3 to 7. In six out of the seven lessons observed in this part of the school, behaviour was good with none

that was inadequate. However, behaviour in Key Stage 1 is more variable. The school is fully aware of this inconsistency and is planning to provide extra support to staff to ensure that the new school behaviour policy is fully implemented, while ensuring that staff have a range of additional strategies to support pupils' behaviour.

- Attendance remains low since the last monitoring visit. This is due to a small number of pupils who are persistently absent. The school has now begun to introduce penalty notices and, as a result of this, there is some evidence that attendance is beginning to improve for these pupils. Currently, the school celebrates regular attendance through certificates issued termly and annually with a small prize for 100% attendance at the end of each academic year. The school is now in the process of considering introducing other incentives to encourage more regular attendance.
- Pupils continue to feel safe and happy in school. They look forward to coming to school and enjoy learning, especially when lessons involve practical and investigative work.

The effectiveness of provision

- Teaching and learning have improved in different parts of the school. Inconsistencies still remain with pockets of inadequate progress across the school. However, some children are also continuing to make good progress, particularly in some lessons observed in Key Stage 2 and Year 7. In the strongest lessons, pupils are clear about what they are learning, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and pupils are fully engaged in the learning process. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to be reflective about their learning, either through class discussions or assessing their own success through self-assessment sheets in mathematics. In Year 3, pupils are now encouraged to decide on how well they have understood their 'learning intentions' through placing their books in particular trays for marking. Together with good questioning, this enables pupils in these lessons to make good progress. However, this good practice is still at an early stage of development and therefore inconsistent throughout the school. Planning does not always indicate the appropriate work for the full range of abilities and consequently work is still not always matched to pupils' needs, particularly for the most-able pupils who are not always stretched in lessons. In these lessons, 'learning intentions' are not always shared with pupils and are often too broad to provide a clear focus for learning. Since the last monitoring visit, there is some evidence that learning support staff are now beginning to be used appropriately during the introduction to lessons.
- Since the last monitoring visit, the school has held additional training to help ensure that assessments are becoming more consistent. Staff now have a clearer picture about where the past inaccuracies lay. There is

some evidence that assessments are becoming more accurate in some subjects and some year groups. However, the school is very clear that current assessment still lacks the accuracy required to help ensure that all pupils make the rapid progress required to make up for past inadequacies. With the support of the local authority, the school has a number of additional training sessions to further support teachers in the assessment process.

- There is now evidence that marking in books is beginning to improve. Some teachers are now using the school policy and are beginning to mark according to the learning objectives using a 'traffic light system'. Pupils report that some marking provides them with constructive advice on how to improve their work, especially in mathematics. However, despite these improvements, the school is aware that marking still remains inconsistent across year groups and subjects. The new marking policy requires more time to ensure greater consistency can be established across the whole school. In an effort to support pupils' understanding of their 'next steps' in learning, the school has introduced target setting in English and mathematics. Pupils now have target cards and are more aware of these targets.
- The improved tracking system has now been completed electronically and teachers have taken on more responsibility in analysing pupils' progress. They have started the process of using this information to identify pupils who are underachieving and consider the appropriate interventions. The school is now considering how best to refine these 'progress sheets' to provide more specific details about such interventions.
- The whole-school tracking documents provide a helpful overview on pupils' progress and attainment. The school is now working towards ensuring that it ascertains the Key Stage 1 results of all its pupils so that it can begin to set targets that enable pupils to make at least satisfactory progress over time.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement through rigorous systematic approaches by: establishing reliable, accurate assessments in all year groups; using information from assessments to plan lessons and adapt work to match the needs of all year groups of learners; and ensuring that pupils receive useful advice and guidance about how to improve their work - **satisfactory**

The effectiveness of leadership and management

- The affiliated headteacher provides very strong leadership with a clear vision for future developments. Consequently, all staff are now working towards a common goal and remain positive about the challenges they face. They are clear about the areas of improvements and the necessary

steps needed to bring about the changes required to improve outcomes for pupils within the school.

- Since the last visit, the affiliated headteacher has monitored planning, scrutinised books alongside the school data, and provided written feedback on this scrutiny and the progress being made towards the targets set for pupils. In addition, regular informal lesson observations have taken place where verbal feedback has been provided.
- Since September 2010, the role of middle managers has been developed. Leaders for each year group are now in post and in a short time have established close working relationships with their teams and amongst themselves. As a result of this new management structure, clearer lines of communication have been established and middle leaders are now holding teachers to account on the progress that pupils make within their year groups. They provide valuable support to their team members while also providing the necessary challenge to ensure that the curriculum is meaningful for their pupils. Changes to planning have occurred and informal monitoring has taken place in some year groups to ensure consistency in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and guided reading. A direct consequence of this new management structure has meant that leaders at different levels now have a feeling of ownership when new initiatives are introduced, and are empowered to make the necessary changes within their teams. As their roles are so new, it is not yet possible to see the full impact of their work on pupil outcomes.
- Safeguarding issues raised in the section 5 inspection were addressed in full in the last monitoring visit. The school continues to meet the statutory safeguarding requirements. However, the school is not complacent and, since the first monitoring visit, has made changes to the first aid procedures and has appointed a new first aid officer. Visits have taken place to a number of schools to gather good practice. Consequently, changes have been made to how first aid medicines are stored and a systematic approach to ensuring that all medical supplies are valid for use has been put in place. In addition, the Chair of Governors regularly audits the single central record and has checked that the necessary paperwork is in place when recruiting new members of staff.
- The governing body is expanding and new committees have been established since the last monitoring visit. Governors have attended a range of courses and are now seeking further training to ensure that they understand the assessment data held by the school and that they have a range of strategies to fully hold the school to account.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve all aspects of leadership and management by implementing the current plans put in place by the affiliated headteacher, particularly as they relate to: developing management capacity through the school; the

monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the performance of staff to include informative feedback. As a matter of urgency, ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory duties relating to safeguarding - **satisfactory**

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

- Since the last monitoring visit, Reception has moved to another part of the school as new building work to expand the number of classes in Reception is about to start. In September 2010, two new teachers were recruited for Reception, one of whom is the new Early Years Foundation Stage leader.
- The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader is fully aware of all the changes required to bring about the necessary improvements to this provision and has made good progress in tackling the previous inadequacies identified.
- In a short period of time, both teachers in Reception have worked hard to improve planning such that it is now detailed and fully takes account of all six areas of learning. Teachers carry out regular observations within lessons and these informally impact on daily planning. The school is now considering developing their planning such that any changes made as a result of observations are formally recorded with a greater focus on individual needs.
- The learning environment has been greatly improved despite some deficiencies in resources remaining. For example, more books and resources are required to teach phonics and reading. In addition, children would benefit from larger equipment both indoors and outdoors to further develop their creative and physical skills. The classrooms are inviting and clear labels and systems are now in place to encourage pupils' independent learning.
- A new assessment procedure has been developed and the creation of children's profiles has begun. The baseline assessments now accurately reflect children's starting points.
- There is now a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning. These learning opportunities are beginning to cater for the differing needs of children such that they are now making satisfactory progress.
- Improved communication systems with parents and carers have ensured that children are well settled and are confident in their new settings. Parents and carers are able to share information with the teachers at the beginning and end of the day. A daily home/school link book proves to be a valuable system to provide additional information. On Wednesday morning, parents and carers also have the opportunity to observe how phonics is taught to their children.
- Since the last monitoring visit, the outside play area has changed to a new location. It is now being used more effectively to promote learning but still requires further development to ensure that indoor and outdoor learning becomes seamless.
- Procedures for ensuring that children are safe are fully compliant.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve provision, management and outcomes of the Early Years Foundation Stage by: developing management capacity in the Early Years Foundation Stage; ensuring that a strong well-resourced Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is provided; improving the quality of teaching and assessment; and making sure pupils are safe at all times - **good**

External support

The local authority has continued to provide valuable support to the school. This has involved training for the governing body and financial support as the school currently has a deficit budget. The school has received good support from its School Improvement Partner. This support has involved a number of visits to the school to scrutinise pupils' work, analyse data and provide training on performance management.