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Mrs Arbon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Arbon

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Talbot Combined School

Following my visit with Jon Palethorpe, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 March 2011, 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 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 – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate.

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; using information from assessments to plan lessons and adapt work to match the needs of all year groups of learners; ensuring 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 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.
- Improve provision, management and outcomes of the EYFS by: developing management capacity in the EYFS; ensuring that a strong, well-resourced EYFS 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 third monitoring inspection on 9–10 March 2011 Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited 13 lessons and scrutinised documents and pupils' work. They also 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 previous monitoring visit, there has been one new teacher appointed to cover maternity leave, and two new teaching assistants. A permanent headteacher has now been appointed to start in September 2011. New building work has started to extend the school and increase the number of classrooms in Reception.

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

Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.

- Children in Early Years Foundation Stage continue to make generally satisfactory progress in lessons. However, the school's own data indicate that at this stage in the year, progress is inconsistent between the two classes and in certain areas of learning. This is particularly the case in linking sounds and letters, writing and calculation. Since January of this year, new interventions have been put in place to improve the rates of progress in these subjects, and there is some evidence that it is beginning to have an impact on children's outcomes.
- In Key Stage 1, lesson observations and the school's own internal data indicate that a significant number of pupils are making inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In Years 3 and 4, lesson observations show pupils are beginning to make at least satisfactory and, for some, better progress. However, this is not reflected in the school's own tracking data which suggests inadequate progress.
- The majority of pupils in Year 5 are on track to make satisfactory progress, although the school is aware that some pupils are making inadequate progress, particularly in writing. In Year 6 and 7, the internal data and evidence from lesson observations indicate that many pupils are now making good progress.
- Current internal data indicates that attainment at the moment in Year 2 and Year 6 is low. Attainment in Year 7, however, is broadly in line with expectations.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.

- Despite some evidence of improvement, behaviour in Key Stage 1 still remains a hindrance to raising achievement for some pupils. The school now needs to rapidly address this concern to ensure that behaviour does not continue to be a barrier to improving outcomes for these pupils.
- Attendance has improved although it still remains low. This is due to a small number of pupils who are persistently absent and a significant percentage who are absent because of ill health. The school recognises that they need additional support from the Education Welfare Officer and needs to further develop positive incentives to address the low attendance levels.
- Pupils continue to feel safe and happy in school. They are clear about who they can go to for support and know that adults are there to help them. They enjoy coming to school and talked with enthusiasm about the role of 'guardian angels' in supporting one another in the playground.

The effectiveness of provision

Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.

- Teaching and learning have improved in many classes in Key Stage 2 but remain inconsistent and occasionally inadequate throughout the school and particularly in Key Stage 1. Nevertheless, some children are continuing to make better progress in some classes in Key Stage 2 and Year 7.
- In the strongest lessons, learning intentions are specific and clear. Pupils are fully engaged in their learning and enjoy the rapid pace of these lessons. Work set is practical and pupils are encouraged to assess their own learning and that of their peers. Through topic work, pupils are being encouraged to become independent learners. In one lesson in Year 3, children were encouraged to set their own questions and follow their own interests when learning about settlements. This provided them with good opportunities to share their own discoveries and listen to the views of others. However, all these good practices are implemented inconsistently across the whole school and in particular, in Key Stage 1.
- Teachers are now ensuring that planning identifies the needs of different pupils. However, in some lessons, because of a lack of teachers' subject knowledge and gaps in their understanding about the national curriculum levels, work set still does not meet the needs of all pupils, and often

makes no reference to national expectations. This, combined with poor behaviour, leads to pupils making inadequate progress. Learning intentions, although shared with pupils, remain inconsistent across the whole school in quality, despite extensive staff training and support that has taken place since the previous visit.

- Inaccurate data still remain a barrier in some year groups to the accurate tracking of pupil progress. The school now needs additional support to verify both their current data and identify an accurate starting point against which to track future progress.
- The school has made improvements to how they record the additional intervention required by those pupils who are underachieving. However, in some instances the 'next steps to learning' are not linked to national expectations or are not specific enough.
- Marking and target setting remain inconsistent throughout the school. In some lessons, pupils report that they find it useful when teachers share the success criteria at the beginning of the lesson as this gives them an opportunity to assess their own learning. However, comments in pupils' books to support future learning are limited and too variable across the whole school.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection in 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 – **inadequate**.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.

- The affiliated headteacher continues to provide strong leadership with a clear vision for future developments, although some members of the leadership team are not yet having a full impact on outcomes. All staff are working hard to address the areas of concern. They are following the plans set down in their action plan.
- Since January 2011, the senior leadership team along with the school improvement partner have carried out 43 lesson observations. The impact of this can be seen in the growing trend of better lessons in Key Stage 2. However, there is little evidence of impact on the quality of teaching and learning or pupil outcomes in Key Stage 1.
- The work of middle leaders continues to vary considerably in quality and effectiveness. Some have carried out formal observations and provided

written feedback whilst others are just beginning to informally monitor the work of their colleagues through team meetings, 'drop-in' observations and tracking pupil progress. Curriculum plans have been re-written although these do not always lead to appropriate lesson plans. Year leaders are also involved in supporting their colleagues in writing 'progress reports' for pupils who are underachieving. However, the interventions identified in these plans are not always appropriate or specific enough to bring about the required improvement. Some middle leaders have yet to formally evaluate the impact of intervention programmes.

- Despite the dedication of the leadership group, many are new to their roles and some are at the stage of managing their teams rather than providing effective challenge and guidance. Some of them lack the experience and knowledge required to bring about the rapid improvements needed to the quality of teaching and learning and, consequently, pupil outcomes. Although changes have been made since the previous visit these have not brought about school improvement quickly enough. The school urgently requires additional full-time support from experienced colleagues to help the affiliated headteacher to address the issues more rapidly and provide effective role models for the less experienced leaders within the school.
- Safeguarding issues raised in the section 5 inspection were addressed in full in the first monitoring visit. The school continues to meet the statutory safeguarding requirements. The chair of the governing body has taken a lead role in assuring that safety regulations and procedures have been established for the new building development on site. He regularly monitors these procedures through on-site 'spot checks' to ensure pupils and adults are safe at all times.
- The governing body has established new systems for monitoring the school's work through 'pupil voice' meetings and learning walks. Governors have attended a range of courses to ensure they have a stronger understanding of assessment data.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection in 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 – **inadequate.**

The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.

- The outdoor provision within Reception has improved. There is a greater emphasis on all the six areas of learning and pupils are using this space more frequently. During this visit, pupils were seen developing their social skills in the role-play area by establishing a café where they were taking orders and discussing the price of pizza. As a result of these improvements, children continue in general to make satisfactory progress and feel safe and secure within this more effective learning environment.
- Planning is beginning to be adjusted to take into account the interests of pupils. Currently, they are studying 'super heroes' as this is a theme that many children were keen to explore. There is now a greater focus on child-initiated learning and this is reflected in the greater emphasis given to it in the weekly timetable.
- Learning stories and journals have been established to help track the progress that children are making. The school is still considering how best to adapt their planning to reflect the needs of individual children.
- The school has now ordered new resources to teach reading and phonics. However, the financial difficulties of the school have meant that the purchase of larger equipment both indoors and outdoors has still not been made. The school is hoping to apply for a grant to support the purchase of such equipment.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is aware that there is some inconsistency in the processes used to gather information for children's profiles and the emphasis placed on the different strands of learning. Consequently, children's progress is variable between the two classes. However, a plan is already in place to address this.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has identified that phonic development along with writing is an area that requires further improvement. All staff are due to visit another school to observe the teaching of phonics and more focused interventions have started to improve children's writing skills.
- Procedures for ensuring that children are safe are fully compliant.

Judgement

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection in the areas for improvement:

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

External support

The local authority has continued to provide appropriate support to the school. This has involved training for the governing body and additional support from the school improvement partner. However, this support has not had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school and improving outcomes for all pupils. As a matter of urgency, it is necessary that additional support demonstrably improves the capacity of the school to tackle significant shortcomings in pupils' achievement, teaching, behaviour and attendance.

Priorities for further improvement

To further help raise pupil achievement:

- raise attendance to national expectations
- improve behaviour management, particularly in Key Stage 1.

To further improve leadership and management:

- ensure that targeted intervention work is effective, responds to pupils' needs and is regularly evaluated.