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Mr D Edwards
Headteacher
Downsview Community Primary School
Beech Avenue
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Kent
BR8 8AU

Dear Mr Edwards

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Downsview Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5–6 May 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 judgements are 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 Kent local authority.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- The governing body must, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to:
 - the safeguarding of pupils
 - the promotion of equality of opportunity
 - the provision of sex education.

- Develop a culture of respect and a safe environment by:
 - ensuring that the school promotes and celebrates diversity
 - consistently and robustly challenging behaviour or language which may cause anyone to feel unsafe.

- Raise standards and increase the rate of progress made by pupils, particularly in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and 2, by:
 - setting challenging targets, tracking progress and securing appropriate interventions to support those who are at risk of falling behind
 - ensuring that both teachers and pupils are sharply focused on the next steps for each individual pupil's learning throughout lessons and that teachers give clear feedback to pupils based on these
 - ensuring that the curriculum as a whole and individual lessons are relevant, interesting, linked to the real world and strongly support pupils in developing their basic skills.

- Develop leadership at all levels by:
 - establishing a shared understanding of the school's vision and the task ahead
 - instituting effective systems for self-evaluation, forward planning and monitoring of progress
 - introducing robust procedures for holding all staff to account and celebrating success.

Special measures: monitoring of Downsview Community Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 5–6 May 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, including the governing body minutes, and held discussions with the headteacher, subject leaders and class teachers, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, who had taken over the leadership of the school shortly before the inspection took place, has been appointed full time on a fixed-term contract until August 2012. Two new class teachers have joined the school. The one who started in March has the additional role of acting deputy headteacher. A third new member of staff has been appointed in a part-time capacity to oversee and lead the work relating to special educational needs. Links have been made with a local primary school, judged as outstanding by Ofsted, to help support training needs and provide opportunities to observe other staff. The governing body has had two additional members join since the last inspection, one of whom has recent experience of managing a primary school.

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

The school is slowly improving the rates of progress for pupils through the school, although this is more marked in Year 2. Older pupils have risen to the challenge of higher expectations, although it is early days for some in reaching the work rate required to make up for past underachievement. Forming two smaller teaching groups for this age group in English and mathematics is enabling staff to improve their levels of basic skills as weaknesses can be addressed more quickly and directly. Revised systems through the school to identify pupils falling behind are leading to a greater proportion of pupils being on target to reach the expected levels from their starting points. The good start noted in the last inspection for children in the Reception class is being maintained. The close attention to develop children's understanding of letter sounds, number work, collaborative skills and physical abilities prepares them well for the increasing expectations later in their school life. Pupils' low attainment in Years 1 to 6, noted in the last inspection, is often still the case as pupils' writing skills vary in quality and their willingness to speak at length or confidently are still aspects which are not sufficiently developed. Pupils' number skills develop systematically, although there are still too few opportunities for them to apply their skills to 'real world' situations or tasks.

Part of the reason why pupils in Years 1 to 6 make better progress is that since the last inspection, specialist English and mathematics advisory support and guidance from the local authority has helped teachers to look afresh at their teaching approaches. Increased levels of monitoring are also helping staff quickly spot any pupils who are falling behind. In Year 2, pupils benefit from skilful teaching of basic skills, albeit only recently, and this is making a difference in their confidence to write and express themselves. There remains some inconsistency between classes in the pace of learning or in the expectation of the amount of work pupils are expected to do. This is linked to variations in the quality with which teachers develop pupils' skills in activities or by missing opportunities to extend their learning more fully, especially those who are most able.

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

- Raise standards and increase the rate of progress made by pupils, particularly in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and 2 – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils enjoy much that the school offers them and this results in improving levels of behaviour. However, interviews held recently with pupils, and discussions during the inspection, indicate that there are still times when behaviour for some dips both at playtimes and within lessons. Although most pupils behaved well during the monitoring visit, there were occasions within lessons when noise levels rose and for some, maintaining their interest during discussions was difficult for them. The pupils reported that others using inappropriate language had decreased and the school's increased focus on developing pupils' understanding of others is paying dividends in this respect. There is still some way to go before pupils are fully aware of others from differing backgrounds or who hold different beliefs represented nationally. The revisions to playground routines, such as zoning of areas, 'hot spots' where pupils wait to calm down and a lunch club where pupils go to reflect on unwanted behaviour are beginning to make a difference to pupils' behaviour and others' sense of safety. Attendance levels are improving and the school is currently on track to meet its more demanding targets.

The effectiveness of provision

Inspection evidence, together with the school's own more systematic monitoring records, shows that the quality of teaching is improving. This has been aided by some new staff appointments, working with another nearby school, and changes to class organisation. Nonetheless, the proportion of consistently good teaching is still not yet sufficiently secure to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress. Lessons are systematically planned and often make provision for the range of abilities in the class. However, where teaching is no better than satisfactory, it is often because not all individuals and groups are suitably challenged and sufficiently engaged in learning to make good progress. In both satisfactory and otherwise well-

taught lessons, the amount of feedback given to pupils on their progress, or reminding them about what they are trying to achieve, are still not regular features to help pupils increase their progress. There is more attention given to making lessons fun, relevant to pupils' interests or which have a 'real life' connection to help increase their motivation to find out more. In reality, this is not always the case, but pupils report that they enjoy having more practical elements to their learning such as when pupils in a Year 6 science lesson devised ways of separating different elements within water and soil samples prepared by the class teacher.

Teaching in both literacy and mathematics in Years 1 to 6 is more focused upon specific pupils' needs so efforts are targeted with more precision. Pupils' targets are generally more high profile. Pupils are more aware of them and what they are for. This is not true for all pupils however, as some are less able to recall them and the way these are shared or used is sometimes different between classes. Opportunities to develop pupils' speaking and listening are increasingly incorporated into activities, if only by talking with classmates about how well they are doing or to discuss possible answers to a problem. For some older children, talking at length is still a challenge. The teacher's marking of pupils' work offers comment on the success of the work and increasingly sets out the next steps that can be taken to improve it still further.

The revised focus on developing pupils' basic skills through the curriculum is yielding some success in challenging and engaging pupils. Teachers' confidence in using new approaches, making activities relevant or based upon 'real world' experiences varies at present. The school curriculum is increasingly shaped around topics when appropriate to make learning interesting and 'special' themed weeks or days contribute to pupils' enjoyment. Planning of the curriculum has yet to systematically incorporate extended speaking and listening activities, particularly for the oldest pupils.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher, who had only just joined the school at the time of the last inspection, has moved the school forward on a number of fronts. This includes increasing the monitoring of teaching, tackling issues of pupils' behaviour and in setting up systems to record and analyse the progress pupils make. This has clarified and pointed the way clearly for staff in how to improve their work. The recently introduced systems to record the progress of pupils is proving helpful for staff in pinpointing those who need an extra boost in their learning. The appointment of an acting deputy headteacher just before the start of this term is strengthening senior management and the new post holder is tackling important areas such as subject leader training. Quick attention to improving practical aspects to site security has succeeded in ensuring pupils and staff feel more secure. Links with a local outstanding primary school have benefited staff in developing their expertise and in broadening their horizons of what is effective class-based practice. The secondment

of a part-time special educational needs coordinator has given this aspect of the school's work more direction and has strengthened the care, guidance and support of pupils. The governing body, under new leadership just prior to the inspection and with some new members joining since, has benefited from focused training on a number of fronts. This includes the interpretation of school performance data, safeguarding and ways of holding the school to account. It has also revised its committee structures to good effect and statutory policies, highlighted for improvement, are now in place. The school's capacity to improve has strengthened as self-evaluation sharpens. Staff and members of the governing body make increasingly effective use of the performance data on pupils' progress to help identify where improvement is most needed. The governing body and local authority secured the short-term leadership of the school to provide stability to both the day-to-day running of the school as well as prompting improvements. However, the temporary nature of some appointments, particularly the role of deputy headteacher, hinders the long-term stability of the school in ensuring that improvements in assessment, safeguarding, monitoring and to aspects of teaching are maintained.

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

- The governing body must, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to the safeguarding of pupils, the promotion of equality of opportunity and the provision of sex education–good.
- Develop a culture of respect and a safe environment–satisfactory.
- Develop leadership at all levels–satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action is a well-focused document which has enabled the senior leaders to give clear direction to staff, monitor class work and review its improvement actions. Support provided to the school has been very well tailored to its needs. Specialist advisory support has been effective in reshaping provision in subjects where teachers' expertise is variable. Support for governors has been particularly effective in ensuring that safeguarding arrangements are improved to their current secure level and in developing their role of challenging the school by asking more incisive questions about its performance. The headteacher has worked effectively since the previous inspection, and currently with the recently appointed acting deputy headteacher, to coordinate local authority support and to ensure that it is channelled to areas of greatest need. Regular support from local authority officers is helping guide the emerging improvements and in clarifying arrangements regarding seconded posts, links with other schools and the long-term permanent appointment of a headteacher.