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Mrs P Murley  
Interim Headteacher  
Balksbury Junior School  
Floral Way  
Andover  
SP10 3QP

Dear Mrs Murley

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Balksbury Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2010.**

- Raise attainment across the school so that a very large majority of pupils make good or better progress each academic year, through:
  - improving the quality of teaching so that 80% of it is good or better, particularly with reference to pace and challenge and providing clearer direction to pupils on how to improve their work
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to talk about, use and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding.
  
- Increase the effectiveness of the school's leaders and the governing body in driving school improvement by ensuring:
  - self-evaluation is more frequent, rigorous and realistic
  - the school development plan gives a clear sense of direction, identifies exactly what steps are to be taken and has identified points at which the impact can be measured
  - the governing body plays an active role in challenging the school regarding pupils' outcomes and routinely evaluates its policies; the quality of teaching is monitored more rigorously and frequently, and that staff training is targeted on the precise improvement areas.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Balksbury Junior School**

### **Report from the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 May 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and the school's data about the progress being made by pupils, examined the single central record, and observed nine part-lessons and one assembly. The inspector spoke informally to some parents and carers, met with a group of pupils, staff, two representatives from the local authority as well as the new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor.

#### **Context**

The Balksbury Infant and Junior schools are now federated under one governing body and three new governors have been appointed. The Chair of the Governing Body from Balksbury Infant school has been elected as the chair of the newly formed governing body following the federation. The interim headteacher has been appointed as the substantive headteacher for both schools and takes up her post officially in September 2011.

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

Most pupils progress satisfactorily, on a day-to-day basis, but this progress is inconsistent throughout the school and within most year groups. The school is successfully closing the attainment gap between girls and boys. This is partly due to the improvements made in the way pupils behave. Despite the progress being made, levels of attainment remain low for too many pupils given their starting points. The most progress being made in mathematics since January 2011 has been in Year 3, while the least progress made in the same subject is in Year 4. Conversely the most progress made in reading and writing has been in Year 4, while the least amount of progress has been in Year 3.

The most progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been in Year 6. The school's data show that this group of pupils generally progress as well as their peers in reading and mathematics, but not as well in writing. The quality of support observed for some of these pupils during the course of the inspection was very variable and at times weak. This resulted in a small minority of pupils who were receiving additional support making insufficient progress in their learning.

The progress being made by all pupils is now being tracked more closely and in greater detail by senior leaders. However, there is still not a clear view of the progress being made by all ability groups. Nevertheless the data show that levels of

attainment are rising, albeit slowly. This information is also being used to set targets intended to help accelerate progress, but these are not always sufficiently aspirational.

Pupils demonstrate good attitudes and dispositions to learning. They are more engaged in their lessons and their greater enjoyment of learning is evident. However, some expressed frustration at not being left with sufficient time to complete their work. This is because either their teacher spends too much time talking or because at times they are withdrawn from their lessons for other work.

The quality and presentation of pupils' work is improving. For example, pupils are more aware of how to use grammar and punctuation correctly. Pupils are becoming more confident at producing extended pieces of writing that is engaging and increasingly well structured. Pupils' basic skills in mathematics are also improving such as their knowledge of number bonds and their ability to multiply, divide and solve number problems using a range of strategies. Pupils' ability to use key vocabulary securely in mathematics is still weak and this at time slows their progress. There remain too few opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support and extend their learning. The school is currently addressing this by purchasing additional hardware and software, such as laptops, for use in lessons.

### Judgement

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

- Raise attainment across the school so that a very large majority of pupils make good or better progress each academic year - satisfactory

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

The behaviour of pupils is good. The vast majority are polite and respectful to adults and each other in and around the school. However, some pupils are unhappy about some of the overly boisterous behaviour of others during swimming sessions and in changing rooms. Some pupils also feel that undesirable behaviour appears at times to be rewarded, while there is little praise and acknowledgment of those who are consistently well behaved. There is a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about how to stay safe by, for example, learning about the importance of wearing a helmet when riding a bicycle. There is little however, in terms of spiritual development.

Attendance levels are above average. The school receives effective support from the educational welfare officer with families who do not ensure their children attend school regularly enough.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching is improving slowly and the amount that is inadequate is reducing. However, too much teaching remains satisfactory and not enough is good. This is partly because staff are not embedding the good strategies shared with them during training sessions or from feedback of lesson observations. There are also staff who are good at teaching one subject, such as literacy, but who do not transfer the same good teaching skills and strategies to other lessons. An example of this is the insufficient explicit teaching of key mathematical words, when important vocabulary would typically be taught well in a literacy lesson. A small minority of lessons observed were good. In these lessons, teachers worked in partnership with pupils helping them to reflect on what they needed to do for themselves and only prompting them when needed. This is helping pupils to learn how they can help themselves such as using checklists and sharing ideas. Notable improvements to teaching include ensuring greater clarity of learning objectives, teachers providing examples for pupils such as how to classify 2D shapes, and the improved links with learning in other subject areas.

The biggest improvement has been in the quality of teachers' marking. This is now more diagnostic and linked to learning objectives. There is also some evidence of pupils self and peer-assessing. Although the use of targets is improving, these are not referred to sufficiently during lessons. Teachers are beginning to make better use of ICT to support their teaching and accelerate the pace of learning, but many still require training to enable them to do this well.

Too many teachers are still not secure about what constitutes a good lesson. Many would welcome the opportunity of observing good practice for pupils of similar age to those they teach. There is still a tendency for teachers to be overly directing and not allowing pupils to work things out for themselves. There are too few assessment strategies used during lessons, and this contributes to a slower pace of learning. Although planning includes a range of activities intended to cater for the different needs of pupils, these are still not challenging enough. Furthermore, where lessons do not progress at a brisk enough pace, there are too many occasions when no time is left for extension activities. Some teachers use checklists effectively for pupils to help themselves to improve, but this good strategy is not used routinely by all teachers. Despite the training and guidance about providing pupils with opportunities to talk to each other about what they are going to write, this is not well embedded across the school.

There are more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their basic skills in other subjects, particularly their literacy skills. However, there are still too few links between mathematics and other subjects. Teaching assistants and other additional adults employed by the school are not always deployed to best effect and at times add little value to pupils' learning.

Pupils are provided with homework on a regular basis. Some parents and carers have noted the lack of praise and acknowledgement of their children's efforts, stating that this is starting to demotivate their children.

Pupils say they feel well cared for and appreciate the increased level of trust and responsibilities given to them. The quality of individual education plans have improved but targets are still not specific enough.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The leadership and management of the school is improving, but there is still a high level of external support. Senior leaders are developing their roles well, although there is still a way to go to ensure they have sufficient impact on accelerating progress and increasing the amount of good teaching. Nonetheless, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator are making effective use of data to monitor and evaluate the progress made by pupils. However, not all leaders and teachers are making enough use of data and information about pupils to help drive up standards, for example by setting challenging targets.

There is a clear timetable for undertaking monitoring and evaluation activities and some of this work has taken place. Evaluations, including those of the quality of teaching and learning, do not all record judgements about levels of attainment or learning and progress. The headteacher has been rigorous in addressing inadequate teaching. However, she is not observing lessons frequently enough or following up on areas identified for improvement regularly. The role of some senior leaders as well as middle managers remains underdeveloped. Consequently, they are not all contributing as well as they might to leading in their area of responsibility. The special educational needs coordinator has correctly identified the need to undertake further monitoring of the quality and impact of the work of additional adults.

With the support of the local authority, the school has developed its school improvement plan well and the intended outcomes for pupils are now clear. Most leaders have produced action plans, but these do not include interim milestones against which progress can be measured, and there are still too few links to embedding and securing basics skills.

The newly formed governing body has benefited from training provided by the local authority. Governors are acutely aware of the school's priorities for improvement. There is a stronger governor presence in the school. Governors have yet to provide the school with sufficient challenge about the quality of teaching and learning, pupil progress and levels of attainment.

The health and safety of pupils is a high priority in the school. However, the single central register has not been updated to include all of the new governors and some of the staff from the infant school, who at times work in the juniors.

### Judgement

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

- Increase the effectiveness of the school's leaders and the governing body in driving school improvement - satisfactory

### **External support**

The school has benefited from good external support. This has made a significant contribution to helping the school to set a clear course for making improvements. There has also been considerable support provided by the local authority in the subjects of English and mathematics. The headteacher has benefited greatly from the support provided to her by the local authority and the headteacher of the local secondary school. However, the impact of the support on the whole school has been no better than satisfactory. This is because not all staff are applying the good strategies that have been shared with them on a regular basis. There is still a considerable level of dependency on the external support to help drive improvements and determine the strategic direction of the school.

The school receives accurate and detailed evaluative reports from the local authority, but staff and governors have yet to make full use of these to help embed improvements.