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Mrs Liz Brand
The Acting Executive Headteacher
Sennen School
Sennen
Penzance
Cornwall
TR19 7AW

Dear Mrs Brand

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sennen School

Following my visit to your school on 18 and 19 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 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

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 Cornwall.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - ensuring pupils' work is assessed regularly and accurately
 - ensuring that ongoing assessment is used consistently to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' age and ability
 - ensuring that age-appropriate National Curriculum levels are used in all subjects when planning work for mixed-age classes to ensure continuity and progression in learning
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work
 - improving pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring data is accurate and analysing it more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils
 - driving improvements in the quality of teaching by rigorous monitoring of planning and classroom performance and taking effective action to address any weaknesses
 - ensuring that governors are rigorous in holding the school to account for tackling weaknesses in provision and improving outcomes for pupils.

Special measures: monitoring of Sennen School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 May 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, visited lessons and looked at a wide range of the pupils' work. He met with the acting executive headteacher, teaching staff, the chair and vice-chair of governors, together with two other members of the governor monitoring group, parents and pupils. The inspector also had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.

Context

The staffing at the school remains the same as at the last monitoring inspection in January. None of the current teaching staff were working at the school when it was inspected in July 2010.

At the end of the summer term 2010 a teacher who was in post at the time of the inspection in July left the school. In September 2010 two teachers joined the staff, one a newly qualified teacher. In mid September the substantive headteacher became ill and has been absent since then. The local authority, with the agreement of the governing body, arranged for the headteacher of a local primary school to work in partnership with Sennen and this began in late September. The role was defined as an executive headteacher and she divides her time between both schools. From the beginning of the summer term 2011 her time has been divided equally between the two schools. Since November 2010 a part-time teacher has been absent through sickness and the class is taught by an experienced supply teacher.

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

In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2 attainment shows clear improvement. At Key Stage 1 the assessments for this year show that 75% of pupils attained Level 2 or better in reading and writing, with the figure for mathematics being 83%. These results represent broadly average attainment in comparison with national figures over the last few years. In Key Stage 2, assessments show that most pupils in Years 5 and 6 are on track to meet their targets in reading, writing and mathematics. Predictions for Year 6 show that 80% of pupils are on track to achieve Level 4 or better in English and mathematics; this is against their original target last year of 44%. The proportion of pupils predicted to attain the higher Level 5 in both subjects is 20%. These latest predictions represent broadly average attainment. However, pupils in Year 4 have a weaker profile in reading, writing and mathematics and the school has clear intervention strategies to support pupils in this and other year groups. The progress that pupils make has accelerated significantly, particularly in mathematics. For example, school data show

between January and May this year all pupils in Years 5 and 6 made at least expected progress in the subject; in Year 6 the large majority made significantly greater progress than expected.

The impressive improvement in attainment is due to the effective tracking of the progress made by individual pupils and providing intervention and support if required. Furthermore, better progress tracking has led to improved lesson planning which provides carefully targeted activities which challenge pupils appropriately. This has led to pupils' improved understanding of number facts and greater confidence in applying their knowledge and skills. An example of this was seen during a mathematics lesson where Year 2 pupils were confident in their use of a number line to subtract 24 from 55 when working on a written problem. In a lesson with Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils, children understood the place value of numbers and could confidently explain why 0.8 kg is more than 350g. In their class work they can use their understanding of number facts to explain how to multiply 45 by 20 and use this knowledge to quickly and accurately calculate 45×21 .

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

- improving the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 by improving pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are welcoming to visitors, polite and willing to talk about their work. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and their attitudes to learning are good; pupils say they enjoy school. They take full advantage of the opportunities available to them. During the inspection they were particularly excited at being part of a BBC news report about the Olympic torch, which will pass the school next year en route to the stadium in London. Attendance has been a focus for improvement and the latest figure for the current school year is above average.

The effectiveness of provision

The school has continued to develop the tracking of pupil progress and this is accurate. This information is used effectively to prepare lessons which challenge the wide age ranges found in classes. Information resulting from the regular assessment of pupils' progress is also used to inform parents during consultations and as part of the regular discussions with older pupils about how they can improve their learning and skills. Pupils are further involved in their learning by the use of systematic self-assessment using a 'traffic light' system. For example, Year 1 pupils could confidently explain that if they felt that they understood the lesson they would note this on their work with a green traffic light; if they were not so sure about something they could use amber; and, if they were really stuck, a red traffic light. As a result of the secure progress tracking of pupils, the quality of teaching has improved and is now good because teachers plan more effective lessons specifically to meet the

learning needs of groups and individuals. This, in turn, is accelerating the progress made by pupils. A further development has been regular meetings between the acting executive headteacher and teaching assistants to monitor progress of pupils with special needs and to adjust support if appropriate.

Pupils' involvement in the assessment of their work has been developed further by involving them more in the target setting process. Each pupil in Key Stage 2 now has individual targets which show how they have progressed to meet these at regular intervals, as well as information on current targets including one which is particularly stretching.

The school has developed its detailed whole-school planning for English and mathematics into other subjects based on National Curriculum levels. It now has a broad curriculum map which provides a good range of appropriate activities and themes. The pupils now benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum offering opportunities to use and develop their knowledge, skills and interests.

The 'Wow, How, Now' system for marking is well established in all classes and pupils understand and refer to the suggestions from teachers to help them improve their work. Some pupils respond to the marking well, for example a Year 3 pupil who, as a result of her teacher's challenge in her book, found out that the internal angles of a square are all right angles. Overall, the marking system is now embedded as an effective tool for supporting pupils' learning. The learning journey folders for Early Years Foundation Stage children show detailed assessments of individual progress as well as information on a range of interests and accomplishments.

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

- ensuring pupils' work is assessed regularly and accurately – good
- ensuring that ongoing assessment is used consistently to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' age and ability – good
- ensuring that age-appropriate National Curriculum levels are used in all subjects when planning work for mixed-age classes to ensure continuity and progression in learning – good
- improving the quality of marking so that pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting executive headteacher continues to work effectively to improve the educational direction of the school. In this the work of the whole staff team is building on the improvements made during this school year. The progress tracking systems, which were a priority when the acting executive headteacher arrived at the school, have now been embedded in the learning programmes found at the school in order to provide interventions where underachievement is identified. The benefits of these systems are now beginning to be seen in improved outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. This term the data systems are being further developed

with the support of a governor designated to work with the school on the analysis of outcomes for pupils.

Monitoring of teaching and learning continues to be regular and rigorous, supporting improvement across the school. Teaching staff continue to find this effective in helping them to improve their professional skills. Rightly, the acting executive headteacher initially focused on the monitoring of English and mathematics teaching and learning. However, since the last monitoring inspection, this system has been broadened to focus on science and information and communication technology used in cross-curricular literacy and numeracy. This, in turn, is supporting the application of basic skills across the curriculum.

Governors continue to work effectively to support and challenge the school to build on the improvements made. They have actively used the training provided by the local authority to develop clear systems for monitoring the school and to gain greater confidence in the analysis of pupils' outcomes. The driver for this is the governor monitoring group which was established last term. This group meets each half term to review progress against the recommendations from the Ofsted action plan. As part of this process the acting executive headteacher discusses the progress made against the timeline in the action plan and is appropriately held to account. The report from the group is given to the full governing body at each meeting, enabling all governors to review the progress made by the school. A further development is the learning walk undertaken by the chair or vice-chair of governors each week. The notes taken are formally recorded. These notes now form part of the governors' monitoring and evidence grid which is used to record the evaluation of activities related to school improvement. This is an effective document which links to the action plan and makes clear reference to any implications for teaching and learning and finance as well as noting the next steps required to support further improvement.

Progress since last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensuring data is accurate and analysing it more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils – good
- driving improvements in the quality of teaching by rigorous monitoring of planning and classroom performance and taking effective action to address any weaknesses – good
- ensuring that governors are rigorous in holding the school to account for tackling weaknesses in provision and improving outcomes for pupils – good.

External support

The school has continued to benefit from an effective range of support from local authority staff focusing on early years, monitoring of teaching and learning and guidance for the governing body. The overall support for the school has reduced appropriately as the school has developed a stronger capacity for sustained

improvement. However, the local authority continues to work effectively with the governing body on the strategic leadership for the school.

Priorities for further improvement

There are no further priorities.