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Mr Andrew Jolley
The Headteacher
Chesswood Middle School
Chesswood Road
Worthing
BN11 2AA

Dear Mr Jolley

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Chesswood Middle School

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 June 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 February 2011. 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 West Sussex.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Chesswood Middle School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 June 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work including 16 lesson observations, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

Context

Four members of staff will be leaving the school at the end of the year, including the deputy headteacher.

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

Structures and processes are largely in place to gather information on pupils' progress. These data are being used to increase the effectiveness of leaders, managers and the governing body in securing learning and progress for pupils and overall school improvements. Outcomes from this systematic approach to the monitoring of pupils are beginning to show teachers where the gaps in pupils' achievements lie and set higher expectations for all. However, it is too early yet for the school to demonstrate improved progress for pupils because the impact of initiatives introduced to ensure that pupils build progressively on their previous learning has yet to be seen. Also, teaching is not yet consistently good to ensure pupils make accelerated progress in their learning. The school's assessments for Year 6 pupils indicate they are likely to attain broadly in line with the national average. However, pockets of underachievement remain in other year groups, particularly where a legacy of underperformance has hindered pupils' ability to build upon previous learning. The headteacher has restructured the responsibility of leaders and managers at all levels so that they now have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities and are accountable for their actions. A system for reviewing and updating all school policies is well underway. Middle leaders have been provided with greater autonomy to steer and monitor teaching and learning. However, these actions have yet to bring about the desired improvements to the quality of teaching and rates of progress for all year groups.

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

- increase the effectiveness of leaders, managers and the governing body in securing improvement – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning, especially where carefully planned lessons cater for children's individual needs and interests. Pupils are polite to one another, staff and visitors. They are proud of their school and the increased opportunities in some lessons to become actively involved and take more responsibility for their learning. Behaviour is predominantly good in and around the school and especially when lessons engage and motivate pupils. Pupils too say they appreciate the closer supervision that is now in place at playtimes.

The school has worked diligently to adopt recommended good practice across all areas to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. Pupils' attendance has improved and is broadly in line with the national average. This is as a result of the rigorous, yet supportive, monitoring of pupils' attendance and the partnership work the school has developed with support agencies.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching throughout the school remains variable. Mostly satisfactory and good teaching was observed. However, some teaching, mainly in younger year groups, remains inadequate. Strategies to strengthen the quality of teaching through external support, coaching and mentoring have been introduced. However, the impact on improving pupils' learning and progress has yet to be secured. Where good teaching was seen for example, teachers used their good subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons that enable pupils to apply their written calculation strategies successfully to solve real life problems. Also, pupils are provided with regular opportunities to collaborate, reflect and review their work in lessons.

Where teaching is less strong teachers lack focus on what they want pupils to learn and so they make too little progress in lessons. Activities provided by the teacher are not sufficiently tailored for pupils' individual learning needs or take account of their prior learning. Time in lessons is focused on completing a task rather than on what pupils need to learn. As a result, work set by teachers does not adequately challenge pupils to achieve their potential and they remain passive for much of the lesson. Teachers are now provided with good-quality assessment information. However, the regular use of this to inform effective lesson planning and to set challenging targets for pupils in lessons has been introduced only recently and so is not yet embedded throughout the school.

The role of teaching assistants has been carefully reviewed and they are working more closely with teachers to provide good quality support that is focused on supporting pupils' independent learning. They are effective because they give clear, guidance to pupils on what is expected of them. Further training and development are planned to strengthen this valuable resource.

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

- rapidly accelerate progress and raise attainment more consistently for all pupils – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory.

The headteacher has rightly identified that the focus of the school's work must remain on improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. He has worked to systematically address each area recommended for improvement and has a clear vision and ambition for the school. As a result, he has won the confidence of the overwhelming majority of staff, governors, parents and carers through his commitment to high standards and his determination to secure improved outcomes for all pupils. Leaders and managers' skills to monitor and evaluate the school's work have been developed, but follow-up actions as a result of monitoring are not fully embedded to bring about more rapid improvements to teaching and learning. Leaders and managers, at all levels, have responded well to these raised expectations. All action plans now include timescales and measurable targets for improvement. Previous gaps in the curriculum have been addressed and this is leading to better progression and coverage of subjects. The consultation process to improve the curriculum has allowed pupils greater influence in decision making. For example, pupils have been actively involved in the selection of topics for study. This work is also strengthening relationships with parents and carers.

The restructuring of the governing body and new governor appointments have strengthened its capacity to improve. Better communication with school leaders and strengthened systems to monitor the work of the school are providing governors with regular and more accurate information. As a result, the governing body is better placed to support as well as hold the school to account.

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

- ensure that the headteacher's vision and ambition for the school are shared by all leaders and managers involved in school improvement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has provided appropriate support for the school having been identified as requiring special measures at the time of the last inspection. For example, the governing body has received training and support through the additional appointment of two local authority governors. In addition, subject specialists for English and mathematics have begun to work alongside teachers to strengthen their leadership skills and subject knowledge. The full impact of this work has yet to be fully realised throughout the school.

Annex

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders, managers and the governing body in securing improvement by:
 - ensuring that the school improvement plan includes precise actions, timescales and measurable targets for improvement so that staff and the governing body are able to evaluate the impact of actions taken
 - giving middle leaders greater autonomy in steering and monitoring improvement and holding them to account for the impact of actions they take
 - providing additional support for the governing body to be effective in accelerating improvements in the school
 - ensuring all statutory policies and procedures are agreed, in place and rigorously monitored by July 2011
 - ensuring closer supervision of pupils in the playground.
- Rapidly accelerate progress and raise attainment more consistently for all pupils by:
 - increasing the proportion of teaching and learning that is good
 - increasing the pace and challenge in lessons
 - making more effective use of assessment information when planning lessons so that activities more accurately match the needs of pupils
 - using target setting more effectively to challenge pupils to achieve more.
- Ensure that the headteacher's vision and ambition for the school are shared by all leaders and managers involved in school improvement by:
 - rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching and learning so that teachers know how to improve
 - ensuring that assessment systems are fully developed, consistently applied and used well to evaluate pupils' progress
 - ensuring that all teachers take responsibility for assessing pupils' progress regularly throughout the year and making sure they are on track to meet challenging targets
 - reviewing the curriculum so that all pupils receive their full entitlement.