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30 June 2011

Mrs V Arbon  
Headteacher  
Talbot Combined School  
Talbot Drive  
Poole  
BH12 5ED

Dear Mrs Arbon

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Talbot Combined School**

Following my visit with Elizabeth Strange, additional inspector, to your school on 28–29 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 fourth 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

No Newly Qualified Teachers are to 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 Dorset.

Yours sincerely

Susan Gadd HMI

**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.
  
- Improve provision, management and outcomes of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - developing management capacity in the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - ensuring that a strong, well-resourced Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is provided
  - improving the quality of teaching and assessment
  - making sure pupils are safe at all times.
  
- As a matter of urgency, ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory duties relating to safeguarding.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Talbot Combined School**

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 28–29 June 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited 20 lessons and scrutinised documents, and 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, several teachers have resigned and are due to leave the school at the end of August 2011. Building work has now been completed 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 the Early Years Foundation Stage have made better progress in many areas of learning except in writing, where progress has not been as rapid. Much of this accelerated progress is a result of focused adult-led learning and improved provision within Reception.
- Pupils' progress is becoming more consistent with a general trend of improvement. There are fewer cases of inadequate progress and these are now isolated to classes in particular year groups or subjects and therefore more easily identifiable. In Key Stage 1, lesson observations and school data indicate that progress is variable between the two year groups. Many pupils in Year 1 are now making accelerated progress. Progress in Year 2 is on track to improve in mathematics; however it lags behind in English. In Key Stage 2 there are clear signs of improvement with many pupils making secure progress. This is particularly the case in Year 6 and for a growing number of pupils in Year 3. In Years 4 and 5 however, progress is inconsistent between classes and subjects. In Year 7 progress accelerates rapidly in English and mathematics. The school has plans to further target pupils' underachievement in English in the current Year 2 and low attainment in mathematics in Year 5 before the end of this academic year.
- Current internal data indicate that although attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 is likely to be low, attainment in general in other year groups is on track to improve. Attainment in Year 7 is on track to be higher than the national expectations.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

**Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.**

- Behaviour has improved notably in Key Stage 1 as a result of recent changes to staffing and more focused adult support during lessons. This positive start now needs to be fully embedded.
- Attendance remains low when viewed over the whole academic year, however since March attendance has improved substantially. This is as a result of children having a greater desire to come to school and targeted support from the Education Welfare Service.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

**Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.**

- Teaching and learning have improved notably with fewer pockets of inadequate progress remaining across the school. As a result of this improved trend in teaching, learning is beginning to accelerate for many pupils.
- In the strongest lessons, pupils are motivated and keen to learn. They are encouraged to become independent learners through self-assessment and the use of talk partners. Good teacher questioning and detailed planning ensures that work set is well matched to pupils' needs. This, along with specific learning intentions and success criteria, ensures that pupils are focused and clear about how well they are learning. The use of practical equipment and the opportunity to discuss issues related to everyday life provide a meaningful context in which to learn. In these lessons progress is good. In other lessons the pace of learning can be slow at times as a result of teachers spending too much time talking and limited use of talk partners to engage pupils.
- Significant improvements to marking have been made in literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2. This good practice now needs to be embedded in Key Stage 1. In literacy, marking is particularly effective in supporting pupils' understanding of their next steps to learning. The school is aware that pupils are still unclear about their targets and that in mathematics in particular these are not always relevant to their current work.
- Extensive external and internal moderation has taken place to clarify the validity of assessments. As a result of this work the school is very clear about the accuracy of assessments and has plans in place to address some of the inconsistencies revealed before the end of this term.
- Further improvements have been made to the systems used to identify pupils in danger of underachieving. In pupil progress meetings 'next steps to learning' are becoming more specific and are now linked to national expectations.

### *Judgement*

Progress since the last monitoring inspection in the areas for improvement.

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement through rigorous systematic approaches – satisfactory.

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

**Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.**

- The affiliated headteacher, along with other senior leaders, has worked diligently to address all the issues raised at the last visit. Regular monitoring has resulted in marked improvements. The introduction of 'Professional Focus Arrangements' has led to a sharper focus in developing greater accountability among staff and developing leadership capacity. A growing number of staff are now beginning to lead whole school improvements which are having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. For example, weekly book scrutiny by two senior leaders has led to consistent marking across Key Stage 2. A further leader has conducted a detailed audit and analysis of intervention groups across the school. This now places the school in a strong position to identify and evaluate the impact and relevance of these interventions. A greater focus on developing reading across the school has led to significant improvements for some pupils.
- Since March 2011, the senior leadership team, along with the school improvement advisor and other external colleagues, has carried out a number of lesson observations, professional development meetings, scrutiny of data and moderation of assessments. The impact of all these changes has led to more consistent teaching, improvements in pupils' outcomes and greater evaluation among leaders across 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 governing body continues to monitor the effectiveness of school improvement through regular monitoring visits on the specific areas identified for improvements. Reports are written and shared among all governors enabling them to support and challenge the school.
- The challenge for the school is now to ensure that pupils rapidly begin to make consistently good progress while at the same time managing the induction of several new members of staff in September 2011. The incoming headteacher and the local authority recognise the importance of continuing to work closely together to ensure that a smooth transition takes place in September and that pupils' achievement begins to rise rapidly.

## Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection in the areas for improvement.

- Improve all aspects of leadership and management and as a matter of urgency, ensure that the governing body fulfills its statutory duties relating to safeguarding – satisfactory.

## **The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

**Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.**

- Children in Reception are able to follow instructions thoughtfully, such as how to form their letters correctly, and can apply these skills when writing sentences. They are developing very good skills in sounding out words and they concentrate and listen well during these focused times. There are more opportunities than in the past for children to practise regular word-making skills in order to improve writing skills further. The majority are confident when counting on and back and are now beginning to explore counting in twos. Children are becoming increasingly dextrous, handling magnifying glasses to explore mini-beasts, when cutting out and building models or practising their ball control skills for sports day.
- Children now have good opportunities to plan in which activities they would most like to participate and they make thoughtful choices throughout each day. During free-flow time both indoors and out they are able to explore ideas and work cooperatively. They play confidently together and develop good social skills.
- The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has ensured that there are good records in place that carefully document the progress of pupils and enable staff to plan for the next steps in learning. All staff are diligent in recording their observations about individual children but sometimes this time-consuming task prevents assistants from interacting with children. As a consequence some opportunities for supporting learning are missed. When the classes move to their new accommodation there will be more opportunities for greater flexibility in the way adults are used and for more integration across all areas of learning. New resources have been ordered to further develop the curriculum.
- Past inconsistencies in assessment between the two classes in this provision have now been eradicated and there is closer working between staff who share good practice. The school takes account of children's interests when considering the curriculum, and planning has been developed very thoroughly. This is a real achievement. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has a good understanding of the strengths of the setting and of those areas for development. A lot has been achieved in a short time.

- Procedures for ensuring children are safe are fully compliant.

### Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection in the areas for improvement.

- Improve provision, management and outcomes of the Early Years Foundation Stage – good.

**Below are the key findings since the last monitoring visit.**

### **External support**

- The local authority has continued to provide appropriate support to the school. This has involved additional funding and advice to develop leadership capacity, external support to verify assessments and additional time from the education officer to target attendance. As a result of this support, monitoring has improved, resulting in consistent marking in Key Stage 2, and improved teaching, learning and attendance. The school support advisor has provided good support in developing leadership capacity across the school. Leaders now have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities and as a result they are beginning to lead and evaluate whole school initiatives.