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Mr A Meredith
The Headteacher
Ernesettle Community School
Biggin Hill
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PL5 2RB

Dear Mr Meredith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Ernesettle Community School

Following my visit to your school on 29 and 30 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 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 – 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 Plymouth.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - raising attainment through more challenging, focused teaching
 - promoting faster progress in lessons through ensuring better pace and that activities are appropriate for pupils' capabilities
 - providing consistently clear advice to pupils about the next steps in their learning.
- Develop the capabilities of leaders and managers by:
 - using information from self-evaluation more rigorously to address areas of weakness
 - ensuring the governing body monitors the school's performance systematically, raises its awareness of strengths and weaknesses, and provides greater challenge.
- By September 2010, improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing accurate assessment that will inform better planning and teaching
 - using resources, including staff, to ensure children initiate and extend their learning, both indoors and out
 - establishing coherent leadership and management to ensure consistently good practice in this key stage.

Special measures: monitoring of Ernesettle Community School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 June 2011.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other staff, three governors including the chair and vice chair, the principal adviser from the local authority, a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6 and two representatives of parents and carers.

Context

A temporary teacher was appointed to the permanent post of inclusion coordinator from April 2011, ending the short-term arrangements in place since January. A new lead play worker was also appointed from April, with five new play workers taking up their posts shortly afterwards. Three new staff, two permanent and one temporary, have been appointed from September as three temporary teachers will leave the school from the end of August. Although a new local authority governor has recently been appointed to the governing body, two vacancies remain. The school's planned admission number will increase to 60 from September and work is to take place over the summer holiday to remodel part of the Foundation Unit to accommodate more children.

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

Most pupils have made good progress in improving their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has successfully addressed pockets of slower progress, for example in writing in Year 5 and in mathematics in Year 4, using a range of interventions the impact of which has been carefully monitored. The progress made by Year 6 pupils has continued to improve and the school's data indicate an above average proportion on track to reach the expected Level 4 in the national tests in English and mathematics and an impressive number set to achieve the higher Level 5. This represents a significant improvement on the results achieved in 2010. Although progress in writing has improved in Year 2, the school recognises that this is not the case in mathematics. Attainment in Year 2 by the end of this term is likely to be below average.

Efforts to improve the quality of teaching have continued. Rigorous monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work is well established and demonstration sessions have been provided to strengthen teachers' skills in guided reading and writing. The school has made further progress in improving the security of teachers' assessments and samples of pupils' work are now routinely considered by the teams of teachers, underpinned by collections of moderated work. The school has benefited from a recent local authority review that demonstrated that teaching is continuing to

improve. In good teaching observed during this inspection, lessons were planned well and active approaches or interesting stimulus materials were used well to engage pupils. Good attention was paid to checking pupils' understanding, using small whiteboards and careful questioning. Some satisfactory teaching was seen, with an uneven pace of learning. Occasionally, too little time was allowed for activities or too many opportunities were provided for pupils to talk to a partner about their learning. The new approaches to marking are now embedded and the school is well placed to start to engage older pupils more in assessing their own work and identifying points for improvement for themselves.

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

- improve pupils' achievement – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour continues to be good and their attitudes are positive. Pupils interviewed clearly enjoy most aspects of school life, including the recent 'amazing' residential, and value the way that teachers strive to make learning fun. They spoke positively of the targets for improvement that they are set and the approaches staff use in marking their work and were confident that 'they help us to do better'.

The effectiveness of provision

The Nursery and Reception classes now operate as an integrated Foundation Unit that plans and works together effectively. The children's 'books of learning' document their progress well and include photographs, post-it notes and detailed, focused observations as well as some contributions from parents and carers. The outdoor area has developed significantly and was being used well during the monitoring inspection with a wide range of child-initiated learning taking place. Further enhancements to the outdoor learning environment are planned. Improvements in practice are now starting to be reflected in the assessments of children's attainment at the end of the Reception Year. These show a significant improvement on 2010, particularly in children's skills in number and in writing.

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

- improve the Early Years Foundation Stage – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The core and extended leadership teams are now well established and rigorous monitoring has now been extended to include guided reading and writing records. Teachers are now expected to investigate any underachievement by individual pupils in advance of the next pupil progress meetings soon to take place. Plans for improvement are no longer as dependent on the headteacher and all senior leaders now contribute to these. The mathematics subject leader's involvement in lesson observations has been delayed due to the local authority review and this will now

occur in the autumn. The governing body is developing its role steadily. Governors are starting to record visits to the school more thoroughly although, at present, many records list what governors did rather than draw possible conclusions or identify aspects to explore further. Visits are beginning to be organised more systematically and to be linked more closely with key school priorities.

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

- develop the capabilities of leaders and managers – good.

External support

The support of the local authority is good and adjusted well to the good progress being made. For example, the school review group now meets less frequently. Support has been provided for particular priorities, such as guided reading and writing, and the recent local authority review has made a good contribution to the continuing improvement of teaching.