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5 December 2011

Kate Curtis  
Headteacher  
The Talbot Combined School  
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Dorset  
BH12 5ED

Dear Mrs Curtis

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

Following my visit with Deborah Wring, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1-2 December 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 fifth 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

The school should not appoint any Newly Qualified Teachers.

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 Poole.

Yours sincerely

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**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.
  
- As a matter of urgency, ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory duties relating to safeguarding.
  
- 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.

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

### **Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 1–2 December 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited 19 lessons and scrutinised documents, met with the 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, six new class teachers have joined the school along with four new teaching assistants. One previous class teacher has returned from maternity leave. A new substantive headteacher took up post in September 2011. As a result of the many staff changes the leadership team has been restructured into two distinct groups. There are now two classes in Year 7 and children in Reception have moved into a new purpose-built building.

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

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

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with varying skills. The current children started with below age-expected skills in key areas of learning such as linking sounds and letters, reading and writing. In personal and social development their skills were broadly age expected while in 'numbers for labelling', children had skills above age expectations. Children continue to make rapid progress as a result of continuous improvements to teaching and the curriculum.
- At the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, in 2011 attainment fell significantly despite many pupils making accelerated progress throughout that academic year. This was particularly the case for middle ability boys and those pupils not entitled to free school meals. Pupils in Year 7 continued to make accelerated progress over this time.
- Since September, in Key Stage 1 the improved curriculum, teaching and assessment are leading to rapid gains in pupils' outcomes in literacy and numeracy. Despite this significant improvement in the consistency of teaching and learning, progress needs to continue to accelerate at an increased pace to secure the improving trend in attainment.
- Current internal data, lesson observations and book scrutiny clearly show that many groups of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are beginning to reduce the gaps of past underachievement and attainment is rising. However the school is fully aware that some pupils are still making inconsistent progress, particularly in literacy in Years 3 and 4 and in reading in Year 5.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

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

- There is a clear trend of improvement in behaviour throughout the school. Pupils are considerate and polite towards each other and enjoy working in the now positive learning environment. This change is as a result of improved teaching and a developing curriculum. For example, the introduction of 'golden time' has provided pupils with valued opportunities to work with children of varying ages and this helps to support pupils' independence and better progress. The school is now working on developing pupils' behaviour strategies during playtimes.
- Attendance has continued to improve since the end of the last academic year, such that it is now above average. This is as a result of many factors, for example the continuing targeted support from the Education Welfare Service, the introduction of incentives such as attendance certificates and the improving curriculum and teaching. As one child said, 'I didn't like coming to school before but I do now because it's fun! The school is now focusing its efforts to secure and sustain this trend of improvement.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

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

- Classrooms are bright and inviting with pupils' work proudly presented on displays. The most significant changes are the improvements to the quality of teaching and assessments. All teachers use a consistent approach to planning which now includes an impact column so that teachers are focusing on what they want pupils to achieve. Strong subject knowledge and the use of detailed assessment ensure that most pupils receive work that meets their individual needs. A wide range of teaching strategies, for example role play, the use of talk partners and greater opportunities to engage in discussions, enthuse pupils and help develop their positive attitudes towards learning. This has had a particularly positive impact on the attitudes of boys. For example in one class pupils were learning about pie charts and were encouraged to discuss and share their ideas to develop their problem solving skills. All pupils and especially boys engaged in this discussion with enthusiasm. Adults are used well to extend pupils' knowledge and skills within group tasks. However on occasions the pace of learning during the introduction to lessons is slow and teaching assistants are not used effectively.
- Marking is now consistent in literacy and numeracy and provides valuable information to support teachers' assessments. Pupils are now given clear

guidance on how to improve their work and new targets set in writing are beginning to support pupils in developing and applying their skills in this area. In numeracy some pupils are given similar targets for improvement but these have yet to be embedded across the school for all pupils.

- Assessments have been refined in Key Stage 1 so that all staff are using their observations and pupils' work to consistently track progress and identify pupils' next steps to learning. Whole school analysis of data clearly shows the progress that different classes make in literacy and numeracy. This, along with the school's 'critical pathways' document, is proving helpful in setting high expectations among all staff. New intervention sheets have been introduced so that pupils who are underachieving can be discussed in detail in pupils' progress meetings and progress tracked against specific targets. However the school recognises that not all targets are routinely reviewed by the adults. The school is now considering how best to refine the whole school data analysis to demonstrate the improved progress of vulnerable groups over time.
- Despite the improvements in the consistency and quality of teaching and assessments the school fully recognises that with so many new members of staff, many of these improvements are fairly recent and require a longer period of sustained effort to have a full impact on tackling past underachievement.

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 new headteacher along with other senior leaders has provided a 'can do' atmosphere towards continued improvement. Within a short period of time the leadership team has successfully inducted a significant number of new teachers while continuing to accelerate the progress that pupils are making. Leadership has continued to be more widely distributed with new roles being established among middle leaders. New action plans have been written by various subject leaders. While these identify the areas for future development the school realises that more work is required to ensure that evaluations are sufficiently linked to the impact they have on pupils' outcomes. Despite this, some leaders are able to point to specific examples of how they have been able to improve the quality of planning,

marking, teaching and assessments as a direct result of their monitoring and formal feedback to staff.

- Leaders have worked very hard to develop a stronger sense of community cohesion both within school and between parents. Recently a significant number of families attended a pyjama-clad 'books at bedtimes' event to promote the importance of reading within families.
- The governing body continues to ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet the statutory safeguarding requirements. All governors are now linked to specific action plans and are engaged in holding leaders to account through discussions with subject leaders. The governing body has recently reviewed the school's complaints procedures so that parents have a clearer understanding of how best to raise any issues they may have. New dropping off and picking up arrangements have helped to minimise the risks to pupils at the beginning and end of each day.
- The challenge for the school is now to ensure that this positive start to the academic year is built upon and the small pockets of slower progress are eradicated so that overall achievement improves significantly.

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.**

- The new Early Years Foundation Stage building and the improved resources provide children with a bright and stimulating learning environment. The indoor learning classroom clearly reflects the key areas of the curriculum.
- Currently adults are focusing on developing children's skills in linking sounds and letters and extending opportunities to practise their writing skills. As a result of this children are making accelerated progress in these areas. Leaders and managers recognise that more opportunities are required in the outdoor environment to reinforce these areas of learning.
- Improved transition arrangements mean that parents are more involved in their child's learning. For example the introduction of the 'weekly focused books' and sound strings enable parents and children to participate in their classroom learning at home. Recently a significant number of parents participated in the 'come to school day' where parents were able to observe the importance of play in developing children's skills. This along

with curriculum letters and other information booklets has helped to ensure that children have settled well into their new learning environment.

- All adults in the provision have a greater input in sharing children's achievements through weekly meetings and the development of future planning. On occasions the observations made are still descriptive rather than evaluative, although there is now a focus on ensuring that any observations clearly identify children's next steps in learning.
- Risk assessments ensure that this provision meets the safety requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

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

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

### **External support**

- The local authority has continued to provide effective support to the school. The school support advisor has developed leadership skills by carrying out joint lesson observations, moderating pupils' work and working with the school to develop its own self-evaluation. The most notable impact has been in developing greater consistency in the quality of teaching, pupils' learning and ensuring that assessments remain accurate.