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Mr A Meredith
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Meredith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Ernesettle Community School

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 8 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 fourth 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 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 the previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed where suitable professional development can be assured.

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 7–8 December 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other staff, four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair, a senior adviser from the local authority, a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6 and three parents and carers.

Context

Three teachers left the school in the summer of 2011. Two permanent staff took up their posts in September and a further temporary teacher also started at the school who has since become permanent. Currently, a teacher is on sick leave and a teacher who normally covers teachers' planning, preparation and assessment time is carrying out most of her duties. The governing body now has a full complement as two new governors have been appointed.

There have been some changes in the organisation of the classes. In Key Stage 1, there are now separate classes for Year 1 and for Year 2 as well as a mixed-age class for both Years 1 and 2. In Key Stage 2, there are separate classes for Year 5 and for Year 6 and a mixed-age class for Years 5 and 6. Some remodelling of the accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage unit has resulted in a creative area and an adjoining communication-friendly room. The outdoor area now has further features, for example a gazebo and a wildlife area.

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

Good progress in improving pupils' achievement in English and mathematics has been sustained well. Results in the Year 6 national tests in 2011 showed a significant improvement on the previous year and pupils made better progress. More pupils reached the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics. The school is continuing to address pockets of underachievement, resulting from previous gaps in pupils' learning. For example, the skills of Year 5 pupils in reading are weaker than might be expected. Additional support is being provided, including sessions to develop pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters make. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 in the summer of 2011 was well below average. The school's data and inspection evidence indicate that current pupils are on track to do better in the summer of 2012.

Teaching is improving well. Rigorous monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' work continues and classroom observations result in the identification of good practice to be shared as well as points for development that are followed up

subsequently. Practice is currently discussed at staff meetings but it is intended that teachers will observe each other teaching in the near future in order to learn more. Much good teaching was observed during this inspection. Teachers' enthusiasm and vigour, coupled with engaging activities, carried pupils with them, resulting in positive attitudes to learning and good levels of concentration. Good attention was paid to meeting the varying needs of pupils in the classes and the teaching assistants made a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Where teaching was less strong, the focus on what pupils were to learn was not as sharp and their learning proceeded more slowly. The progress made in developing systems to mark pupils' work and help them to understand the next steps in their learning has been outstanding. Pupils have increasing opportunities to reflect on their work, identifying strengths and points for improvement for themselves.

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

- improve pupils' achievement – good.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour in lessons continues to be good and pupils work well. Those interviewed particularly valued the small tasks teachers gave them to do to extend or consolidate learning, where the response was subsequently checked. Pupils thought the 'next steps' identified by the teachers were most helpful. One commented 'you know what you need to work on'.

The effectiveness of provision

The Nursery and Reception staff work together well, supported by regular team meetings where joint planning and discussions of assessment take place. As a result, there is much greater consistency in practice. The outdoor area provides a very rich learning environment that was used well during the inspection and children showed a high degree of independence in their learning. Complemented by the remodelled indoor accommodation, little time or space is wasted in helping children to learn. The improvements have resulted in children reaching broadly expected standards at the end of the Reception Year in the summer of 2011, representing much better progress from their starting points. Inspection evidence indicates that the pace of improvement is being maintained.

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

- improve the Early Years Foundation Stage – outstanding.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The momentum for continued improvement has been sustained well by the core and extended senior leadership teams and pupils' progress continues to be rigorously checked. There is now a single school development plan, although the key priorities

for the school are not easily accessible to the governing body which hampers its ability to monitor progress. The mathematics subject leader is involved in lesson observation so that he can evaluate teaching and learning in this subject for himself. Plans are in place to strengthen leadership further and the assistant headteacher has been working with another teacher who will take on the role of subject leader for English next term. The assistant headteacher will then focus more on coordinating assessment. The governing body continues its steady development. A new approach of 'visit afternoons', in advance of a meeting of the full governing body, has been introduced and records of governors' visits to school are improving. The governing body is raising its profile with parents and carers and governors are set to be involved in monitoring progress with the school development plan, although this is at an early stage.

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 remains well adjusted to the good progress being made by the school. The recent local authority review was focused sharply on evaluating the school's own capacity to drive forward improvement. The school review group has not met recently as this degree of oversight is no longer necessary.