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8 December 2011

Mrs S Sadler  
The Headteacher  
Highbury Primary School  
Dovercourt Road  
Cosham  
Portsmouth  
Hampshire  
PO6 2RZ

Dear Mrs Sadler

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Highbury Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 – 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 12 and 13 October 2010**

- Ensure the governing body meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that leaders at all levels know how to analyse progress data and use challenging targets to eliminate pupils' low attainment and raise standards.
- Ensure that governors rigorously challenge and support leaders and managers, holding them to account for tackling underperformance and improving the achievement of all pupils to at least satisfactory.
- Provide a rich curriculum which is designed to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to at least consistently satisfactory or better, ensuring that:
  - teachers' subject knowledge and use of assessment strategies are secure
  - planning is differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils
  - pace and level of challenge in lessons enable pupils to make progress
  - other adults supporting learning are involved at all times
  - expectations of pupils' learning behaviour are consistently high
  - lessons encourage active learning and are enjoyable.
- Improve attendance to broadly average, reduce the number of authorised absences and put measures in place to follow up pupils' first day absences.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Highbury Primary School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 6-7 December 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, observed 16 lessons and looked at a range of pupils' work. The inspector talked with pupils, staff and parents and carers during the visit and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the education improvement officer.

#### **Context**

There have been a number of staff changes since the previous monitoring inspection. The new headteacher took up her post in September 2011. Three teachers have left the school. Three new teachers have been appointed. The organisation of the classes has been changed. There are now eight classes. Year groups are now taught in parallel-aged classes. The staffing structure has also been changed to include phase leaders. The shadow governing body has been working alongside the interim executive board since September 2011. Pupil numbers are increasing; there are now 235 pupils on roll.

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

Pupils' progress since the last monitoring visit has improved. Underachievement is identified more quickly as a result of higher quality assessment information, which tracks the progress of different groups of pupils. Attainment on entry for children in the Reception classes has improved so that it is near to those levels expected for their age. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2011 remained well below the national picture in reading and writing, but in mathematics pupils' attainment was the highest reached for five years. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011, unvalidated results show that attainment dipped significantly. Attainment in English was lower than in mathematics, but in both subjects attainment was well below the expected levels. The latest school data indicate that a greater proportion of pupils make better progress, although weaknesses remain. Attainment in writing, although improving, is lower than reading and mathematics in Year 1 to Year 6. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to their peers. Attainment in Years 4, 5 and 6 remains low because these pupils experienced slow progress in their lower years. The school knows there is much to do to secure attainment that is in line with the national picture.

Since the last monitoring visit, work in books shows the quality of writing and marking is improving as a result of a sharper focus to improve practice. Pupils say they continue to enjoy their learning; in particular, they appreciate the opportunities

to practise their writing in other subjects through the themed approach to the curriculum which makes learning fun.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Attendance levels continue to rise and have significantly improved since the previous inspection. The school has good systems in place to monitor attendance and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. However, too many pupils arrive late for school. As a result, lessons at the start of the school day are often interrupted and valuable learning time is lost. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development has improved. Pupils speak positively about the school assemblies which focus on developing values such as respect, kindness and self-control. This is having a positive impact on the behaviour of pupils. Since the last monitoring visit, the introduction of a range of playground equipment, which is appreciated by pupils, has encouraged cooperative play. As a result, behaviour in the playground has improved. Behaviour in lessons is good overall. The very small minority of pupils with challenging behaviour are managed well by teachers and teaching assistants.

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

- improve attendance to broadly average, reduce the number of authorised absences and put measures in place to follow up pupils' first day absences – good.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Since the reorganisation of classes in September 2011, teachers have developed their skills and are now planning lessons together in phases. This, together with the introduction of a consistent format for planning and the use of assessment information to plan for the differing learning needs of pupils, has strengthened the teaching provision. The quality of teaching is now predominantly satisfactory or better. However, the proportion of good teaching is still not large enough to sustain good progress and to accelerate the progress of pupils who previously underachieved. When the teaching is most successful, lessons move at a brisk pace, pupils are fully involved in practical learning and problem solving and teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils' thinking. In the Years 5/6 classes, role play and discussions were used well during lessons linked to the Christmas theme, where pupils wrote explanation letters as Santa's elves following the mix up of expected gifts. Pupils were enthusiastic and produced some detailed and well thought out letters using causal connectives and persuasive language. Teaching is less successful when pupils are not provided with opportunities to discuss their learning and share their ideas. The school has been successful in its endeavours to improve the effectiveness of teaching assistants. Staff working in support roles have benefited from good-quality training, including some provided by the local authority. Teaching assistants now provide good support to pupils in lessons. Targets to support improvement in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently used to promote learning and pupils speak positively about their understanding of how to improve their work, through effective marking and feedback. Older pupils are given

opportunities to respond to teachers' comments and self-evaluate their own learning. Since the previous monitoring inspection the learning environment has been further improved in several parts of the school. Classrooms have become tidier and better organised with a consistency in approach to providing useful resources and prompts for learning.

Further developments to the curriculum, which include a comprehensive two-year plan, provide interesting and meaningful experiences for pupils. The school has crafted the themes to take account of the views and ideas of pupils. Pupils particularly enjoy the range of visits that are a regular feature of the themed approach. Motivational 'hooks' to begin the themes, such as the evacuation of pupils to Highbury College as part of the Second World War theme, provided real experiences which successfully engage pupils in their learning.

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

- provide a rich curriculum that is designed to meet the needs of all pupils – good
- improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to at least consistently satisfactory or better – satisfactory.

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

The newly-appointed headteacher has successfully communicated high expectations to staff about securing improvement and has regularly monitored the quality of teaching and learning. The roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders are clearly defined with a clear focus on raising levels of achievement. Subject leaders have produced annual action plans for improvements and phase leaders are held accountable for pupils' progress in their phase of responsibility. Performance management is used effectively to hold teachers to account for improving pupils' progress. However, these improvements are at an early stage of development and it is too early to measure the full impact of these changes, especially on outcomes for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 who underachieve.

The interim executive board continues to work effectively alongside senior leaders and the local authority to support the school's development. The shadow governing body has also attended interim executive board meetings to ensure a smooth transition to its governance in the spring term. The interim executive board has increased its monitoring role in relation to ensuring that the rate of pupils' progress accelerates. The accurate monitoring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has greatly improved since the last monitoring visit. Clear improvements have been made to the way in which the school reports the extent of its progress to the interim executive board. Strategic planning has been rationalised. However, there is insufficient focus within the plan on raising attainment and improving the progress of pupils, or on how the success of its planned actions will be measured. Safeguarding documentation was checked during this monitoring visit. Staff are suitably trained to safeguard pupils and statutory

requirements continue to be met. However, induction arrangements for staff require a greater focus on safeguarding.

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

- ensure the governing body meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding – satisfactory
- improve the quality of leadership and management so that leaders at all levels know how to analyse progress data and use challenging targets to eliminate pupils' low attainment and raise standards – satisfactory
- ensure that governors rigorously challenge and support leaders and managers, holding them to account for tackling underperformance and improving achievement of all pupils to at least satisfactory – satisfactory.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide good support, although the school is no longer reliant on the same level of support as before. Advisers give support when needed, for example in the training of teaching assistants to support reading. The local authority has carried out a number of safeguarding audits. It has also supported the shadow governing body to prepare the necessary documentation to enable the new governing body to assume its responsibilities in January 2011.