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24 February 2012

Mrs S Woodrow  
Principal  
Withington Primary School  
Lock Road  
Withington  
Hereford  
HR1 3QE

Dear Mrs Woodrow

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Withington Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 22–23 February 2012, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2011. 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.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to agreement from the monitoring inspector.

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 Herefordshire.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2011**

- Raise standards and increase rates of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan activities which provide a sufficient level of challenge for all pupils, and especially those who are more able
  - extending opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that teachers:
  - have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - check pupils' understanding during lessons and use this information to move learning forward
  - use a range of techniques to engage pupils fully in their learning
  - create more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility for their learning
  - clearly identify through marking how pupils can improve their work.
  
- Increase the impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement by:
  - ensuring that systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are sufficiently rigorous and lead to accelerated rates of progress
  - developing the role of middle and subject leaders so that they are better able to contribute to self-evaluation and school improvement
  - ensuring that strategic plans with measurable success criteria, identify the specific actions that will be taken to accelerate progress.

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

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 22–23 February 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met the Principal of Withington who has responsibility for leading the federation of Aylestone Business and Enterprise College and Withington Primary School. The inspector also met senior leaders from Aylestone, who have responsibility for leading on literacy and numeracy, the head of learning, who takes day-to-day responsibility for the Withington site, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the National Leader of Education (NLE) who is working with the school and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Senior leaders from Aylestone Business and Enterprise College have been made responsible for the leadership of numeracy and literacy. A newly qualified teacher was employed to cover a long-term absence. Her support is from the Aylestone Business and Enterprise College and another local primary school which works closely with both Withington Primary and Aylestone. The Principal, the head of learning and a local authority representative attended a school improvement seminar in November 2011.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and aptitudes below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Children make good progress and enjoy learning in the rich, vibrant atmosphere. They join Key Stage 1 with attainment which is broadly average.

The school has rightly recognised that, because in previous years pupils made poor progress during Key Stage 1, target setting from Year 2 assessments led to low expectations. Hence they have set challenging targets for pupils in all years based upon their attainment at the start of Year 1. This has raised the expectations for all.

Rigorous systems have been introduced to track the progress made by pupils across all years. These are based upon both formal tests and teacher assessments and are completed each half term. Records from the first three sets of data show that pupils now make better progress. The school failed to meet the current Key Stage 2 floor standard in 2011 but it expects to be above this standard in 2012. Work from pupils' books is also closely analysed. Writing in books shows clear progression, both in complexity of language and in pupils' handwriting. There are similar expectations of written work across all subjects. Pupils, who arrive new to the school, often from

Eastern Europe, settle in well and, once they gain sufficient basic English, make good progress.

Pupils make improved progress in reading. They regularly practise reading to adults and are confident in sounding out words. However, at times, pupils read the words without always understanding their meaning. The school has identified this as an issue and is ensuring that pupils identify any words which give them a problem so that an adult can then explain their meanings.

In lessons, pupils were observed making good progress in the best lessons but, at times, progress was satisfactory, especially when lessons were less demanding or pupils did not know what they had to do. When learning was best, pupils were excited with their work and they enjoyed working in groups or independently. This was very much the case in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children were highly active and engaged. They especially liked working in the 'Chinese restaurant', collecting and counting the money and then making 'noodles' for a meal. In another lesson, pupils were observed developing a better understanding of a character through role play. They also understood the spiritual aspect of empathy and their teacher built upon this when discussing feelings during circle time.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- raise standards and increase rates of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics – good.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Teaching ranges from barely satisfactory to outstanding. In all classes, relationships between pupils and staff are good. There is greater challenge, books are well marked and include advice on how pupils can improve their work. Pupils then respond to their teacher's comments at the start of the next lesson and, in the best example, a learning dialogue ensues.

When staff are confident with subject knowledge they are able to motivate and engage the pupils. They provide a variety of activities and pupils work well in groups or independently. However, when staff are less confident, lessons are more formulaic and staff are not able to adapt their teaching in response to pupils' differing needs. In the best lessons, staff use assessment well to identify pupils' understanding and then adapt activities to challenge them all. Lessons are planned to include a variety of different activities and pupils work well in groups or independently. Pupils say they find lessons more engaging and interesting and that they are able to complete practical activities as well as the usual written work.

Lessons include opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills across a variety of subjects. They also often include opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures, consider moral aspects or reflect upon feelings. In the Early Years

Foundation Stage, children develop excellent social skills through carefully planned activities which encourage sharing.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better – good.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The school is a well ordered community. Pupils are considerate and courteous to each other and to visitors. They have a good understanding of the different aspects of bullying and have recently learnt about cyber-bullying. Pupils say there is no bullying but, at times, pupils are called names which relate to their physical appearance.

In lessons, pupils remain well behaved but they do not consistently become engaged in their learning. Some are compliant and do not show positive attitudes towards their work. Attendance has risen and is average. There have been no exclusions.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

When the school was judged to need special measures there were already well established systems and routines for the federation between the schools. Consequently, actions to improve were taken immediately.

The Principal gives excellent guidance and steer as to how the school will improve. This ambition is shared by staff. The commitment and importance of supporting the federation is demonstrated by making senior leaders from the secondary school responsible for the leadership of literacy and numeracy, and ensuring all staff who support on the primary site are of the highest quality. The close work of the three senior leaders from the secondary school and the head of learning has brought about significant improvements. There is now a robust system of tracking pupils' achievement. Consequently, targets are far more demanding. Planning and teaching are closely monitored and any areas of development are quickly identified and support given. These are linked to performance management so that staff are held to account for their work and their classes' achievement.

There is a well established improvement plan with clear measurable success criteria. Actions are regularly evaluated to ensure they are bringing about improvements. Members of the governing body are fully involved in supporting and challenging the school. The effective committee structure means that there are regular feedbacks on how well the school is progressing. These are also shared with the National Leader of Education and the local authority. The school is rightly concentrating on the areas

identified in the previous inspection but is also identifying additional areas it needs to improve, for example extending the curriculum.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Increase the impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement – outstanding.

### **External support**

The local authority's statement of action is good. It provides a sound framework for further improvement, including suitable support for the leadership of the school, subject expertise and for the governing body. There are clear success criteria by which it can be evaluated and those for achievement have been updated. The National Leader of Education has supported the school well, including utilising the experience and expertise of staff from her own school to provide additional support. Members of the governing body have received effective support to ensure that they have a good understanding of the key components of governance when working in a special measures school. The local authority works well with the National Leader of Education to coordinate support well and evaluate its impact to ensure actions bring about the necessary improvements.