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Mrs A Nettleship
Headteacher
Weston Mill Community Primary School
Ferndale Road
Plymouth
PL2 2EL

Dear Mrs Nettleship

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Weston Mill Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 and 24 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 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 September 2010

- In order to raise attainment and accelerate progress, improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that assessment information is used consistently to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' ages and abilities.

- Develop the effectiveness of leadership by:
 - ensuring all staff with leadership roles have the skills to carry them out and fully understand their accountabilities
 - ensuring assessment information is accurate and used more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils from their starting points, and to set challenging targets
 - rigorously monitoring and driving improvement in the quality of teaching.

Special measures: monitoring of Weston Mill Community Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 23–24 February 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other staff, two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils from Years 4 and 6 and spoke on the telephone to a senior adviser from the local authority.

Context

The Key Stage 1 leader has returned from maternity leave and the teacher who had been covering has been retained to enable a fourth teaching group to be created in English and mathematics in Years 1 and 2. A new teaching assistant has been appointed to support Years 3 and 4 and another has replaced a departing colleague in the Foundation Unit. One teacher in Key Stage 1 is currently on extended sick leave and the deputy headteacher is covering her teaching commitment.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' progress in English and mathematics is continuing to improve as a result of better teaching. The school's data and inspection evidence indicate that Year 6 pupils are on track to make better progress and to reach higher standards than those who left the school in 2011. Attainment by the end of Year 2 is also set to improve on 2011, particularly in reading. Progress has been slower in Years 1 and 5, especially in reading and writing. As a result, the school has created additional teaching groups to provide extra support in both years and is carefully monitoring the impact of this.

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress – good

The quality of teaching

Teaching is continuing to improve as a result of sustained, rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work is complemented by classroom observations and these activities result in clearly identified strengths as well as areas for improvement that are detailed, specific and followed through. Some good teaching was observed during the inspection. This was characterised by enthusiastic and purposeful teachers who gave clear explanations and made good use of techniques to assess pupils' understanding to guide activities in lessons. Where teaching observed was less effective, activities sometimes did not meet the learning needs of all pupils fully and, on occasion, there was not enough clarity for

pupils on what they were supposed to do. The skills of staff in the scheme to develop pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) have developed well and the gaps in the learning of increasing numbers of pupils have been addressed and these have moved off the scheme. Additional support for teachers, where needed, has been carefully targeted and includes detailed advice on planning and carrying out classroom activities.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour, observed in classrooms and around the school, remains good. Those interviewed were confident that they knew how well they were doing and how to do better. They recognised that teachers 'always try to make learning fun' and valued the frequent marking of their work.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher's strong commitment to the continuing improvement of the school is clear. The deputy headteacher is making an effective contribution, particularly in leading the phonics programme, and also in addressing wider priorities that the school has identified, such as the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage and of the curriculum. Middle leaders are increasingly confident in carrying out their roles and their evaluation briefings are now more sharply focused in contributing to self-evaluation. The literacy and numeracy coordinators take the lead in checking teachers' plans and monitoring pupils' work and both are now involved in classroom observations. The first-hand information gained is resulting in specific actions to strengthen the teaching of English and mathematics, for example exploring activities to provide better stimulus for pupils' writing. These two coordinators now lead the regular meetings where teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in each year group.

The governing body has continued to improve in fulfilling its role. As well as supporting the school's improvement, governors are asking questions of the school's leaders more confidently, for example where data show slower progress in some year groups. Governors' visits to see the school at work are now well established and being developed further.

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

- Develop the effectiveness of leadership – good

External support

The local authority's support for the school continues to be well judged as it has rightly decided that the school does not need extensive support to maintain the pace of improvement. Although the links facilitated with a neighbouring school continue to be helpful and local authority staff maintain a watchful eye over the school's progress, engagement with the school is now similar to that for other establishments. Local authority support for the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been initiated and funded by the school.