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Anthony White
Headteacher
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GU7 3HW

Dear Mr White

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Godalming Junior School

Following my visit with Jane Chesterfield, additional inspector, to your school on 22 and 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 September 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 – inadequate

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Surrey.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2011

- Raise attainment and achievement particularly in English so that by the end of Year 6 in 2012 at least 85% of pupils make at least two levels of progress from Key Stage 1 by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length when learning in different subjects
 - reducing the number of photocopied resources and worksheets used in lessons
 - improving the teaching of the basic skills of spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that by July 2012 it is at least satisfactory and at least 60% of lessons are good by:
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information to plan lessons and to provide activities that are well matched to the learning needs of all pupils
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve by setting challenging targets in English and mathematics to reduce the gap between the attainment of boys and girls
 - providing activities that engage pupils more and enable them to take a more active role in their learning
 - ensuring teachers provide guidance to pupils about what they have done well and how they can improve the quality of their work, especially their writing
 - providing opportunities for pupils to respond to comments made in marking.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - introducing robust systems for self-evaluation
 - using the information from self-evaluation to establish a long-term strategic plan with appropriate short-term plans with sharply defined aims and priorities focused on school improvement
 - developing systems to ensure that leaders at all levels, including the governing body and middle leaders, monitor, challenge and develop the work of the school.

Special measures: monitoring of Godalming Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 February 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. They observed 13 lessons and made short visits to small-group support sessions for pupils identified by the school as requiring extra help in their learning.

Context

Since the previous inspection one member of staff has left, new appointments have been made to the roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and two new parent governors have been appointed. A partnership arrangement has been instigated by the local authority with another local school whereby its staff provide support for Godalming Junior School.

Achievement of pupils at the school

There has been some improvement in pupils' progress over time in English and mathematics, but it is not accelerating quickly enough for them to reach suitably challenging long-term targets, including those set for Year 6 pupils this summer. Weakness persists in key areas such as writing, including in spelling and presentation. In lessons, pupils' engagement in tasks remains partial because, too often, they are unclear about the purpose of what they are doing or about the features of high-quality work. This hinders them in making decisions about how to improve what they are doing so that learning lacks pace. Welcome developments in teaching see pupils using fewer worksheets and widening opportunities for writing extended pieces. Nevertheless, work is still not challenging enough, especially for more-able pupils. The school is monitoring more carefully the progress made by boys and ensuring their targets are as high as those for girls. However, in lessons, boys are less able to sustain good progress in learning when, as is too frequently the case, they are unclear about the value of what they are doing.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise attainment and achievement particularly in English so that by the end of Year 6 in 2012 at least 85% of pupils make at least two levels of progress from Key Stage 1 – inadequate.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is not improving securely enough to boost pupils' achievement. Some aspects of teaching are gaining strength but the deficits noted at the last inspection remain too evident. Lesson planning now acknowledges more accurately the differing attainment of pupils and the targets they should reach. However, the information is not used to ensure pupils are challenged suitably in all aspects of lessons. For example, during discussions there is little evidence of more-able pupils being asked more challenging questions, and in practical tasks pupils are often expected to do the same work to a greater or lesser degree rather than work fully tailored to their attainment.

In most lessons, pupils are told what to do but questioning is not always used well enough to test and extend their understanding of key ideas, or help them see how to move their own learning forward. As a result, teachers have a patchy awareness of pupils' progress and pupils cannot take the lead in their learning. Where pupils are given practical problems, such as when Year 5 pupils measured the school buildings, progress improves because they are more active as learners. However, this feature is absent in too many lessons; for example, Year 6 pupils spent too long analysing others' writing before doing their own.

Systems to ensure pupils know their long-term targets and how to reach them in lessons are improving. Nevertheless, the use of strategies, such as target cards is inconsistent so some pupils know what they are trying to achieve while others do not. Marking is more regular but still varies in quality with mistakes missed and pupils not always asked to make the required improvements. Teachers have positive relationships with pupils. They manage behaviour well but do not exploit this to adapt lessons' structures, for example by allowing groups of pupils to work in different ways appropriate to their needs.

Teaching assistants make an inconsistent contribution to learning. It is sometimes well planned and useful, particularly when they identify pupils' weak understanding of what they are doing and counter it by re-explaining tasks. But there are times when they talk across the class teacher, hindering pupils in listening to what is said, or do not adapt pupils' work well enough. For example in a mathematics lesson, some pupils in a small group waited too long for others to finish before moving on.

More effective use is made of assessment information to provide additional support for pupils who are falling behind. In common with teaching in general, teaching in the small groups typically used to help pupils catch up, is of variable quality and the possibilities offered by the high pupil to teacher ratio are not always capitalised on.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching so that by July 2012 it is at least satisfactory and at least 60% of lessons are good – inadequate.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, welcoming and enjoy good relationships with each other. They have positive attitudes to learning but a legacy of passivity in lessons has not been tackled so as to build on their desire to learn.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and deputy headteacher continue to have high expectations for the school and have rightly widened the involvement of other staff in leadership tasks. However, the impact made on the vital area of teaching is limited. Strategic planning has seen some improvement and addresses the areas of weakness raised in the previous inspection. Plans contain challenging targets for pupils' achievement but do not extend beyond this academic year, making it unclear how the school intends to sustain its work. A policy for teaching has been drawn up but does not clarify the non-negotiable aspects of teaching or set out comprehensive expectations in key aspects, such as planning challenging work for pupils of differing ability.

Some progress has been made in monitoring and evaluation, but self-evaluation documents still describe the school's work rather than its impact on pupils' learning and what the next steps are. Teachers are more aware of their accountability for pupils' progress, and action has begun to tackle the most inadequate teaching. However, the monitoring of teaching centres on too many issues, pays too little heed to pupils' progress and does not refer back to the targets set for individual teachers to check their response. Staff training has not bolstered teachers' understanding of good teaching or leaders' capacity to improve it. Middle leaders, such as English and mathematics coordinators, are more involved in monitoring teaching but have had too little training to do this properly.

Curriculum planning has seen some gains in ensuring work better matches pupils' attainment, but this remains variable across classes. Systems to track pupils' progress are potentially effective, with regular data collection and meetings to identify those moving too slowly. Some steps have been taken to ensure pupils' attainment is accurately measured although judgements are sometimes too generous. The strategic use of data is patchy. It is used effectively to check the impact of additional intervention sessions, but is not used well enough to monitor how different groups of pupils achieve overall. The governing body is gaining ground in monitoring the work of the school, and is determined to help it improve. It

communicates regularly with school leaders, is asking more demanding questions and is undertaking useful training to improve its ability to interpret school performance information.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership and management – inadequate.

External support

The local authority's statement of action to support the school was judged fit for purpose. However, support subsequently provided by local authority personnel and partner school staff has made an inadequate impact on the school's capacity for improvement. In particular, it has not focused closely enough on rapidly improving teaching.