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9 March 2012

Mrs Lynda Strodder  
Headteacher  
The Mark Way School  
Batchelors Barn Road  
Andover  
SP10 1HR

Dear Mrs Strodder

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Mark Way School**

Following my visit to your school on 7–8 March 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 July 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

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 Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Helen Barter  
**Additional inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2010**

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - implementing the agreed interim management structure, with clear roles and responsibilities being understood by the team
  - establishing rigorous and robust systems to monitor all aspects of provision
  - improving governance through developing the management skills needed to hold the school to account.
  
- Improve students' progress by:
  - developing and implementing strategies to manage consistently students' behaviour
  - promoting good attendance through the development and implementation of effective strategies
  - developing and implementing effective systems to set targets which challenge students and give a clear picture of their progress.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - ensuring that teachers' planning clearly identifies the needs of students and how these will be met in every lesson
  - making sure that feedback to students tells them what they need to do to improve their work and reach the next level or grade.

## **Special measures: monitoring of The Mark Way School**

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 7–8 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, visited nine lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two members, and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

The interim headteacher will be leaving the school, as planned, in July 2012 following a year's contract with the local authority. The governing body has successfully appointed a substantive headteacher who will join the school in September 2012. Meetings between the interim and substantive headteachers are already under way. The teacher for design and technology is leaving the school at Easter 2012 and a temporary teacher has been found for the summer term. During this monitoring inspection one teacher was off sick and a supply teacher was in place.

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

The rate of students' learning is improving. The school now has an accurate record of students' current achievement from which to judge students' progress and has set appropriately challenging progress targets based on their prior learning rates. The senior leadership team can now pinpoint where students' progress needs to accelerate and is holding teachers to account where insufficient progress is being made by individuals or by subject. The school can demonstrate that there is no significant difference in achievement between different groups across the school.

The school's data and inspection evidence indicate that, so far this year, all Year 7 students have made one sub-level of progress in English and most have made one sub-level of progress in mathematics. Most Year 11 students are predicted to gain a GCSE in mathematics and all are predicted to gain an Entry Level in English. Although there is variability because of the small cohorts in each year group, whole-school data show that students' progress is improving well in English, satisfactorily in mathematics and other subjects, but weaker in science and design and technology. The school is taking action to improve the quality of teaching in these two subjects so that progress improves in line with others. The focus on improving students' reading skills continues with regular morning reading sessions. Plans to introduce regular reinforcement of high frequency words and to improve students' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) are well founded.

## **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching has improved well since the last monitoring inspection. Teaching was good in seven of the lessons observed and satisfactory in two. This matches the school's own current evaluation of teaching and learning. The senior leadership team has improved the rigour by which it monitors and evaluates teaching, scrutinising how well teachers match work to students' needs and identifying specific areas for improvement and ensuring they are followed through. Scrutiny of students' work shows that feedback to them, through marking, is consistently matched to their targets. They know what they must do to improve when assessing their own learning at the end of each lesson. They are engaged well in the assessment process, monitoring their own progress through their National Curriculum levels displayed in classrooms.

There are now higher expectations for students' learning. Teachers are using the improved data about students' progress to plan work which meets their needs. While lessons have good pace, teachers also give students time to think about what they are learning and to express their own ideas. There are greater opportunities for students to learn together in groups and to take on the challenge of harder work. Students show pleasure in developing skills and gaining new knowledge. In a Year 10 geography lesson, they learned the prime source of different foods in Great Britain, improving their literacy skills as they searched the atlas index for place names and their mathematical skills as they used the coordinates to locate the places on the map. In a Year 11 music lesson, they listened intently to African music, identifying the repeated musical pattern (ostinato) and going on to compose music using a range of percussion instruments. Teaching assistants offer effective support because their prime role in supporting learning is now well planned for.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – good

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Students' behaviour has improved markedly since September. The school is now a calm and safe place in which to learn. Students appear more happy and relaxed and feel safe because lunchtimes are more sociable and fewer incidents occur at break times. Relationships are positive and students enjoy learning together. A group of Year 7 students independently played a mathematics game, taking turns and praising each other for getting the multiplication sum right. In a Year 11 physical education lesson, the 'umpire' sensitively helped develop the table tennis skills of others. Students are keen to earn points for good behaviour at the end of each lesson. The chance to show that they can improve their behaviour, if they are warned that they are at risk of detention, has decreased the actual number of detentions. Staff use effective interventions to support and manage individual

students with particular difficulties and disruptive behaviour is less frequent. There have been no exclusions since the start of the academic year.

The school's strategies to improve attendance are reducing the number of persistent absentees to just a few individuals. The attendance figure is steady, being 92.5% so far from the start of the academic year. Students' improved attitudes to learning are having a good impact on lesson attendance. The school now has data to monitor trends in absence from class, by time of day, subject or teacher.

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

- Improve student's progress – good

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

The interim headteacher has strongly influenced the continuing improvement of the school, ensuring that weaknesses in the school's effectiveness are being addressed systematically and with rigour through the Raising Attainment Plan. Robust performance management systems are now in place and are setting high expectations for the performance of the senior leadership team and staff. Opportunities to work with colleagues from a high performing school have improved confidence and influenced ambition to succeed. The school is now firmly focused on high expectations for students' progress and achievement. The senior leadership team is increasingly effective in carrying out its role. Its monitoring and evaluation activities are now more sharply focused on students' progress and the impact of initiatives taken to improve it. Its improving knowledge of the school's effectiveness is contributing to more accurate self-evaluation and identification of the next actions required for further school improvement. Subject leadership is improving in nearly all subjects but has yet to influence improvement in science and design and technology.

The governing body continues to strengthen its role. It ensured a rigorous and thorough recruitment and selection process for the substantive headteacher. As well as supporting the school's improvement, governors are now asking questions of the school's leaders more confidently, for example where data show slower progress in some subjects.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management – good

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide good advice and support from consultants which is planned carefully to support improvement, particularly in English and mathematics. Targets in the statement of action are now realistic as a result of improved data on students' progress. The local authority has supported the governing body well during the recruitment of the new headteacher. It has stated its

commitment to providing support for the substantive headteacher from September 2012, recognising that the school's progress must not falter.