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8 March 2012

Mrs K Porteous  
Headteacher  
Barrow Hill Primary School  
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Barrow Hill  
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Dear Mrs Porteous

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Barrow Hill Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 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 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 – satisfactory.

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 Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national averages by:
  - regularly monitoring the performance of individual pupils
  - using assessment information to identify where pupils are making insufficient progress
  - providing support for these pupils to ensure their progress improves and is at least good
  - setting achievable but aspirational targets for each individual pupil and closely monitoring their progress towards them.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that it has a greater impact on pupils' learning by:
  - providing a greater level of challenge for each pupil
  - increasing the pace of lessons to accelerate the speed at which pupils learn
  - improving marking so that it informs pupils how to improve their work
  - providing more opportunity for pupils to practise and consolidate new learning
  - making sure that tasks build progressively on what pupils already know
  - ensuring that any repetition of work is kept to a minimum and used for consolidation or revision purposes only.
  
- Improve leadership and management, in particular the monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders and the governing body, by:
  - giving all governors a greater understanding of the school's performance
  - ensuring governors work closely with the senior leaders to evaluate what the school is doing well and where it needs to improve
  - using this evaluation to draw up effective plans for improvement
  - ensuring that monitoring of lessons focuses on the impact that teaching is having on learning
  - using assessment and tracking data more effectively to hold teachers to account for the performance of the pupils in their class through regular pupil performance reviews.
  
- Improve curriculum planning so that pupils' learning progresses systematically as they move through the mixed-age classes by:
  - ensuring that work is planned carefully to provide all pupils in each class with tasks at an appropriate level for their age and ability
  - planning structured opportunities for pupils to practise core skills, particularly reading with understanding, writing for different purposes and problem solving
  - providing better guidance for teachers when planning lessons.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Barrow Hill Primary School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, listened to pupils read and met with the headteacher, members of staff, two governors, including the newly appointed Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives from the local authority. Six joint lesson observations were completed with the headteacher.

#### **Context**

This is a very small primary school with children being taught in three classes with up to three year-groups in each class. Prior to the inspection in October 2011, the headteacher had resigned. The local authority secured an experienced headteacher to fulfil the role of full-time acting headteacher until the new substantive headteacher took up post in January 2012. One teacher has left the school and one new teacher has been appointed. During the monitoring visit, two classes were being taught by temporary teachers owing to staff absence.

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

Attainment remains too low and there is still much to do to tackle the underachievement that exists in the school. The task that teachers face, particularly in the core subjects, of providing suitable learning opportunities to meet the needs of three or more different age groups in a single class, is a challenging one. The school's data and pupils' work clearly show that too many pupils are not achieving as much as they could. Evidence from lesson observations demonstrate, despite intensive support from local authority consultants, that pupils in two of the three classes are not making fast enough progress. The results of national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2011, in mathematics and writing, show that pupils were nearly two years behind their peers.

Notwithstanding the weakness outlined above, there are promising signs of recovery, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage where children are experiencing better teaching and a more appropriate curriculum and therefore outcomes are beginning to improve. The new headteacher is establishing a clear direction for the school with the prime focus on raising achievement. Decisive action, such as implementing a regular assessment regime, is providing leaders with more accurate and reliable data. Tracking systems have been established which chart

pupils' progress. Outcomes are being shared with teachers at half-termly pupil progress meetings to help them identify those pupils or groups making insufficient progress.

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

- raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national averages – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

The visit confirmed the school's view that too much of teaching remains inadequate. There have been some improvements, albeit in one class. None of the teaching seen during the monitoring inspection was of good quality. This is significantly lower than the school's analysis. Lessons seen during the monitoring visit had objectives for learning but these were not precise enough. Strategies such as talking partners, the use of mini-white boards and peer- and self-assessment are sometimes used by teachers in lessons, but this is not consistent.

A common weakness is that teachers do not cater for the needs of individual pupils. Teachers do not provide all pupils in each class with tasks at an appropriate level for their age and ability. Planning fails to distinguish clearly enough the precise level of work that individuals or small groups require to ensure they make adequate progress. Teachers make insufficient use of information about what pupils know and can do. Additionally, teachers do not assess pupils' progress during lessons carefully enough to enable them to plan for the pupils' next steps in learning. Consequently, the pace of teaching and learning is inadequate.

While individual learning targets have been set for reading, writing and mathematics for each pupil, it is not clear how these affect the activities provided for pupils, or how or when targets have been achieved. In some pupils' books, the target is recorded and updated with comments as to when it has been achieved. In others, targets have been left blank and not updated so it is difficult for the pupils to know their relevance or importance. It is difficult to justify this practice, particularly when the work subsequently provided appears to be generic to all pupils.

The implementation of a marking policy is a positive step. Nevertheless, leaders know there is inconsistency. Marking does not always identify precisely what pupils need to do next to improve. In some classes, marking is not effective in improving pupils' writing because common errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar are not corrected often enough. Pupils are not provided with time to respond to teachers' comments.

Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in lessons is slow. Skills covered in the initial input or in focused lessons such as guided reading or phonics sessions are not being transferred into the independent reading or in pupils' independent work. Teaching is not good enough to enable pupils to make the more rapid

progress required to fill the gaps in their learning and raise attainment, particularly in mathematics. Furthermore, the investment in good-quality training and work done to improve teaching is squandered because some staff do not fully accept the extent of the weaknesses within the school or their roles in contributing to improvement.

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

- improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that it has a greater impact on pupils' learning – inadequate.

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

In general, relationships between teachers and pupils are friendly and respectful. A positive start has been made to rebuild and strengthen the school's ethos. This is underpinned by an appropriate behaviour management system that pupils report has helped to minimise disruption in lessons. Generally, pupils are well behaved in lessons; this improved climate for learning has yet to have impact on improving the quality of learning.

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

The newly appointed headteacher has been quick to respond to the issues identified in the last inspection report and from the monitoring she has carried out. She is aware, for example, that subject leadership is weak.

Communication with parents and carers and the wider community has been strengthened. Parents and carers know that they can come into school to see individual members of staff or the headteacher should they have a difficulty. The headteacher is winning the hearts and minds of most parents and carers in making the required changes to the school to increase its effectiveness as a place for learning. She is clear that much more needs to be done to capitalise on the improved climate for learning to ensure that pupils achieve their potential.

A suitable process of monitoring and evaluation has been implemented, including learning walks, planning scrutiny, lesson observations and book trawls, resulting in clear plans for improvement with measurable outcomes. Teachers whose work is in need of improvement have been identified and suitable programmes of support set up.

The governing body is increasing its involvement in the school and beginning to hold the school to account for standards and quality. Its members are now better informed following a period of training. At the time of the inspection, the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils met requirements.

The school has rightly prioritised the need to improve English and mathematics lessons so has made limited progress in improving the cross-curricular links that would enable pupils to practise and apply their basic skills in other subjects. It is too early to measure the impact on pupils' progress of actions taken.

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

- improve leadership and management, in particular the monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders and the governing body – satisfactory
- improve curriculum planning so that pupils' learning progresses systematically as they move through the mixed-age classes – satisfactory.

### **External support**

The local authority has maintained its commitment to a demanding timescale of regular monitoring. Its statement of action is well focused, with the key issues for the school drawn into a coherent set of priorities. There has been a determination to keep a close watch on the school's development and to provide the necessary support and challenge when needed, although, the school would benefit from a greater focus on basic aspects of lesson structures, planning and classroom assessment processes. The support provided by the school's adviser is of good quality. She has regularly attended meetings, provided good advice and timely support. Her notes of visit are thorough and contain good evaluation of strengths and areas for development. Consultant staff have worked alongside teachers and have modelled good practice, some of which has been taken on board.