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16 March 2012

Mrs E Robertson  
Interim Headteacher  
Meredith Infant School  
Portchester Road  
Portsmouth  
PO2 7JB

Dear Mrs Robertson

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Meredith Infant School**

Following my visit with Cyndi Millband, additional inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 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 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 Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Develop the school's capacity to improve by ensuring that leaders, including those at the highest level:
  - prioritise and plan realistically to address key weaknesses
  - implement rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluation as a matter of urgency.
  
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 so that by July 2012 none is inadequate and the large majority is good or better, by ensuring that:
  - performance management is improved
  - systems for assessing learning are consistently applied, monitored and evaluated so that staff understand pupils' abilities and provide suitable challenge for all, including more able pupils
  - pupils learn actively so that their willingness to learn is encouraged.
  
- Improve the achievement of all pupils, particularly in writing, by:
  - ensuring that sufficient time is allocated to teaching literacy
  - ensuring that more pupils achieve the higher Level 3 by the end of Key Stage 1 in 2012
  - identifying a leader to take responsibility for the curriculum and its planning
  - improving the curriculum so it provides a stimulating and appropriate framework for pupils' learning that meets individual needs.
  
- Improve attendance and punctuality throughout the school, so that the proportion of pupils who attend is in line with the national average by July 2012, and fewer pupils arrive late for the school day.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Meredith Infant School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

An interim headteacher has been appointed to lead the school until the end of this academic year. The school's future remains unclear; there have been inconclusive discussions about amalgamation, federation and academy status. It is proposed that another interim headteacher is appointed from September. The deputy headteacher is part time and will be taking maternity leave at the end of May. A teacher has recently left and the inclusion manager has stepped in to teach the class.

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

A system for tracking pupils' progress has been introduced, but the school is not monitoring outcomes for different groups. Nevertheless, the progress of individuals is now reviewed every half-term. The strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning are better understood and teachers are planning lessons that are more responsive to their needs. The school's assessment information shows that pupils are on track to achieve their targets in both reading and mathematics. This suggests that achievement in these areas is improving. However, as this is not reflected clearly in pupils' work in lessons and over time, the accuracy of teachers' assessment and the rigour of target setting are called into question. The school is not on track to meet its target for the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in writing at the end of Year 2. The range of writing tasks seen in pupils' books and in lessons was limited. This is stifling pupils' creativity and their awareness of audience and purpose in writing.

The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that there is appropriate coverage of subjects. Sufficient time is allocated to the teaching of literacy. The balance of delivering topic work and discrete subjects in Key Stage 1 is still being worked out.

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

- Improve the achievement of all pupils, particularly in writing – inadequate.

## The quality of teaching

The action plan for improving the quality of teaching has not supported the development of individual practitioners well. Teachers have lost their confidence in knowing what constitutes good teaching and they are not clear about the benefits of some initiatives. For example, they rightly question the use of stickers in exercise books outlining learning intentions and success criteria that most pupils do not understand and many cannot read.

There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching but there is good practice, including in Key Stage 1, that has not yet been shared systematically. Some common characteristics distinguished the most effective practice:

- learning objectives were appropriately challenging and built on pupils' prior attainment
- success criteria were clear and shared effectively with pupils
- interesting activities, that were well matched to pupils' needs, encouraged creativity and independent thought
- questioning was used well to review progress and pinpoint gaps in pupils' learning
- pupils received precise verbal feedback about their progress and were moved to the next step in learning as they were ready
- the judicious use of praise instilled confidence in pupils.

Where teaching was less effective:

- the purpose of learning was not clear
- activities were not responsive to individual needs
- the pace of learning was slow with too many pupils pottering through tasks
- teachers and learning support assistants were not deployed effectively to intervene and drive progress as necessary
- extension and/or consolidation work was not available as pupils completed tasks.

Teachers and support staff are very clear that they are accountable for pupils' achievement and well-being but formal arrangements for performance management are not in place. There has been a focus on improving the accuracy of assessment through moderation and this is developing teachers' understanding of progression. However, there is a lack of challenge in some lessons and more able pupils in particular are not stretched. Opportunities for pupils to learn actively are increasing but there is little evidence of them acquiring the skills of self- and peer-evaluation. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning through targeted interventions but they are not always well deployed in lessons.

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 so that by July 2012 none is inadequate and the large majority is good or better – inadequate.

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

This is a harmonious and orderly community. In conversations with inspectors, pupils were clear that they felt safe in school. The positive relationships are an important factor in pupils' enjoyment of learning. In lessons, most apply themselves diligently. There is very little disruption and pupils are eager to please.

Systems for monitoring attendance have been improved considerably. The school is working hard with pupils, parents and carers to highlight the link between regular attendance and successful learning. As a result of these actions, attendance is improving. The gap with the national average is closing and persistent absence has been reduced. However, too many pupils arrive late to school in the morning.

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

- Improve attendance and punctuality throughout the school – satisfactory.

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

The uncertainty about the leadership and future of the school is having a very negative impact on staff morale and progress with the areas for improvement. Leaders, including governors and the local authority, are not working cohesively. Uncertainty sabotages attempts to create a shared vision of improvement underpinned by a common purpose and clear sense of direction. Staff are hard working and have the potential to improve outcomes for pupils. However, a sharp focus on improving teaching through working with practitioners on an individual basis has not been achieved. The monitoring of teaching is more regular and systematic but is not sufficiently focused on strategies for accelerating pupils' progress. Similarly, professional development has not been well-targeted at tackling specific weaknesses and sharing strengths.

The governing body is inexperienced and is not supporting and challenging the school effectively. The current committee structure does not give clarity to its work or facilitate corporate decision-making.

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

- Develop the school's capacity to improve – inadequate.

## **External support**

While the local authority's statement of action to support the school is fit for purpose, impact has been limited. This is because there is no genuine consensus with the school about the best way to implement improvement plans and move forward.