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16 March 2012

Mrs S Sadler  
Headteacher  
Highbury Primary School  
Dovercourt Road  
Portsmouth  
PO6 2RZ

Dear Mrs Sadler

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Highbury Primary School**

Following my visit, with Stephanie Matthews, additional inspector, to your school on 14–15 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Ensure the governing body meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that leaders at all levels know how to analyse progress data and use challenging targets to eliminate pupils' low attainment and raise standards.
- Ensure that governors rigorously challenge and support leaders and managers, holding them to account for tackling underperformance and improving the achievement of all pupils to at least satisfactory.
- Provide a rich curriculum which is designed to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to at least consistently satisfactory or better, ensuring that:
  - teachers' subject knowledge and use of assessment strategies are secure
  - planning is differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils
  - pace and level of challenge in lessons enable pupils to make progress
  - other adults supporting learning are involved at all times
  - expectations of pupils' learning behaviour are consistently high
  - lessons encourage active learning and are enjoyable.
- Improve attendance to broadly average, reduce the number of authorised absences and put measures in place to follow up pupils' first day absences.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Highbury Primary School**

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 14–15 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, observed 16 lessons and looked at a range of pupils' work. The inspectors talked with pupils, staff and parents and carers during the visit and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and the education improvement officer.

#### **Context**

There have been a few staff changes since the previous monitoring inspection. Two teachers have left the school. One teacher has been appointed. The governing body assumed responsibility for the governance of the school in January 2012. Pupil numbers continue to increase; there are now 237 pupils on roll.

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

The school's tracking shows that pupils in Year 6 continue to make progress towards their targets and previous underachievement is being eradicated. The extent of progress in other parts of the school remains erratic but improving with more pupils across different year groups making better rates of progress. Evidence from lesson observations confirms this. The scrutiny of learners' work over time shows that pupils now make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. In all year groups, progress in writing is stronger than in mathematics. In the Years 3 and 4 classes, pupils were improving instructions they used after making an Easter basket. Pupils showed a good understanding of imperative verbs and how to organise instructions. However, in some lessons, many groups of pupils do not receive sufficient challenge to make the good progress of which they are capable. The quality of teachers' questioning has improved, although in some lessons, questioning was too narrow and the responses from pupils were not used well enough to further develop their thinking to promote learning. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics because of a sharper focus being placed on more accurately monitoring their progress and implementing interventions more swiftly.

Standards in handwriting vary. Older, more-able pupils have neat handwriting using a cursive script, which is well organised in an individual style. However, across the school, where expectations are lower, untidy work goes unchallenged and the quality of handwriting is generally weaker.

Pupils say lessons are enjoyable and they have a better understanding of what they are learning in lessons. Targets are set in reading, writing and mathematics and pupils are encouraged to set their own personal target. In the Years 5 and 6 classes, targets are used well to challenge pupils to improve. However, in other classes, targets are not used effectively enough to eliminate low attainment and accelerate pupils' progress.

### **The quality of teaching**

Lesson observations confirm that the quality of teaching is improving. Teachers have responded well to the challenge and support provided and as a result, the quality of teaching has improved. No inadequate lessons were observed during the monitoring visit. Staff are reflective of their teaching and set targets for their own improvement which are regularly reviewed. Coaching has been used to good effect to improve teaching skills and develop consistency in practice across the school. Classrooms are now more organised, with effective learning walls for literacy and numeracy to support learning in lessons. Planning is much more focused, enabling teachers to have a clear idea of how to engage pupils of different abilities. In a Year 1/2 lesson focussing on telling the time, work was well-planned to meet the differing learning needs of all abilities within the class. Learning objectives and steps to success are explained well, providing pupils with a clear idea of what is expected of them in lessons. Talk partners ensure pupils are actively engaged in learning. Although teachers' questioning has improved, opportunities are sometimes missed to challenge pupils of differing abilities, particularly during whole class teaching.

Teaching assistants are more effective in supporting learning. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are increasingly well supported in class, and when withdrawn, because their individual needs are better understood and catered for. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and, although the pace of learning in less effective lessons is slowed due to low-level disruption, pupils' behaviour is generally well managed. Pupils enjoy learning and say that the themes and topics planned for them are interesting and fun. The increased range of visits and visitors enhances learning and has increased pupils' engagement, for example the visit to the rain forest exhibition. Although marking and feedback to pupils have improved, they remains inconsistent and do not always support pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work. This is particularly the case in mathematics.

The phonics programme is effectively supporting younger pupils to develop good reading, writing and spelling skills. However, this programme is not systematically taught throughout the school. As a result, some older pupils' knowledge of sounds and letters is limited.

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

- Provide a rich curriculum which is designed to meet the needs of all pupils – good
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to at least consistently satisfactory or better – satisfactory

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

Pupils' attitudes to learning have improved. They engage well in learning during lessons and respond positively to the many opportunities provided to talk with a partner about their learning. Behaviour has also improved and apart from a few examples of off-task behaviour in some less effective lessons, behaviour does not interrupt their learning. The behaviour policy is consistently applied and pupils say that the school's behaviour rewards and sanctions help them to behave well. However, some lessons do not start punctually because routines at the end of playtimes and lunchtimes do not support pupils to arrive in lessons in an orderly fashion and settle quickly.

Attendance continues to improve and is broadly average. Absences and lateness have significantly reduced. The school continues to monitor attendance well, acting swiftly to improve instances of lateness and poor attendance.

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

- Improve attendance to broadly average, reduce the number of authorised absences and put measures in place to follow up pupils' first day absences – good

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

The headteacher and senior leaders have maintained the ambition and drive to improve the quality of teaching and in this they have been successful. In addition, they have had a positive impact on developing the skills of middle leaders and phase leaders to monitor progress in their areas of responsibility. Assessment systems are now more established and assessments in reading, writing and mathematics take place regularly. Assessments of pupils' attainment in all subjects are being developed and subject leaders have received well-targeted support to increase their effectiveness to support teachers' subject planning and to develop the curriculum. As a result, subject leaders are now well equipped to check on the development of skills across the curriculum. The curriculum provides more opportunities for pupils to experience a range of activities and apply their basic skills of literacy and numeracy through topic work. Although targets are set for pupils to provide guidance on their next steps for improvement, these are not monitored with sufficient rigour to accelerate pupils' progress to rapidly raise attainment across the school.

The interim executive board has now been disbanded and the newly formed governing body has assumed responsibility for the strategic leadership of the school. Governors continue to ensure the safety of pupils and staff and all safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Strategic plans are well focused on the most important areas for improvement. Recently the governing body has established new committee structures to ensure its statutory duties are met and to regularly monitor progress towards achieving the schools' improvement priorities. Governors' challenge to tackle underperformance and eradicate underachievement is less well established. As a result, raising pupils' achievement remains the most important area of focus for the school.

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

- Ensure the governing body meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding – good
- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that leaders at all levels know how to analyse progress data and use challenging targets to eliminate pupils' low attainment and raise standards – satisfactory
- Ensure that governors rigorously challenge and support leaders and managers, holding them to account for tackling underperformance and improving the achievement of all pupils to at least satisfactory – satisfactory

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide effective support. The education improvement advisor regularly visits the school to check on progress. The level of support from other consultants has been reduced. There are plans in place to moderate the judgements made by teachers when assessing pupils' work to ensure accuracy and consistency.