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23 March 2012

Mrs P Murley  
Headteacher  
Balksbury Junior School  
Floral Way  
Andover  
SP10 3QP

Dear Mrs Murley

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Balksbury Junior School**

Following my visit with Alan Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Raise attainment across the school so that the very large majority of pupils make good or better progress each academic year, through:
  - improving the quality of teaching so that 80% of it is good or better, particularly with reference to pace and challenge and providing clearer direction to pupils on how to improve their work
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to talk about, use and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding.
  
- Increase the effectiveness of the school's leaders and the governing body in driving school improvement by ensuring:
  - self-evaluation is more frequent, rigorous and realistic
  - the school development plan gives a clear sense of direction, identifies exactly what steps are to be taken and has identified points at which the impact can be measured
  - the governing body plays an active role in challenging the school regarding pupils' outcomes and routinely evaluates its policies; the quality of teaching is monitored more rigorously and frequently; and that staff training is targeted at the precise improvement areas.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Balksbury Junior School**

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 20–21 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and the school's data. They met with senior leaders; teachers and support staff; members of the governing body, including the Chair and Vice-Chair; a group of parents and carers; a group of pupils and representatives from the local authority. One whole-school assembly and 13 part-lessons were observed. Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' workbooks from every class and scrutinised teachers' planning, marking and assessments.

#### **Context**

A new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body have been appointed, and the governing body has reorganised its committees.

The literacy leader has resigned her full-time position as class teacher, but will remain as literacy leader for one day a week during the summer term. The school has advertised for a new senior leader to begin in September 2012 and has appointed a new Year 3 teacher, due to take up a full-time position in the summer term.

The number on the school roll is rising steadily.

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

Improvements to the quality of teaching and higher expectations of pupils contribute to accelerating rates of progress across the school. However, this is still not consistently good or better for all classes, especially in writing and particularly in Year 4. Pupils now make better progress in mathematics, but still progress more rapidly in English. Despite improving rates of achievement, some of the pupils in Year 6 still underachieve given their starting points in Year 3.

Pupils with special education needs are generally improving satisfactorily, but their progress is still not as good as it could be. Improving partnerships with outside agencies as well as the additional support provided to this group enables them to make particularly good progress with their personal, social and emotional development. However, a very small minority of pupils with special educational needs and whose circumstances make them likely to be vulnerable make less progress than their peers. This is because previous assessments have at times been overly generous. Furthermore, some aspects of their learning and development are not always sufficiently well planned for. An example is with the development of their reading skills, including their knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent

(phonics). There is not a sufficiently systematic and cohesive approach to the teaching of phonics for those pupils who are still not reading fluently. The nurture group, for example, while providing good support leading to pupils' increased levels of self-esteem and confidence, is not reinforcing the teaching of phonics for those pupils who are still at an early stage of reading.

Typically, learning is put into a meaningful context and pupils are encouraged to talk about their work and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils, including girls, find their mathematics lessons more interesting. They are becoming more confident at calculating by using a range of strategies, including partitioning. They can add negative whole numbers and solve problems by working systematically. However, older pupils are not learning enough about data handling. In English, pupils are developing their ability to write persuasively. A good example was observed in Year 4 with pupils writing a letter to the local council to try to persuade them not to build on a nature reserve. In this lesson, pupils built effectively and rapidly on their previous learning about identifying key features of persuasive text. They drafted paragraphs which included conditional sentences, connectives and well-made arguments. Across the school, pupils are increasing their ability to use grammar and punctuation correctly. Pupils say that they are provided with more opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing. However, when the pace of teaching in lessons is slower than is necessary, pupils are not always provided with sufficient time to complete their work.

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

- Raise attainment across the school so that the very large majority of pupils make good or better progress each academic year – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

As a result of further improvements made to the quality of teaching, no inadequate lessons were observed during this visit. Teaching is securely and predominantly satisfactory and the proportion that is good is increasing, albeit slowly. Teachers plan activities that engage and motivate pupils and cater for pupils' different abilities. They provide pupils with clear examples of the work expected of them, and encourage them to work collaboratively and share ideas. Although still not used as well as it could be, some teachers make particularly good use of information and communication technology to support and enhance learning. Good examples include the use of film clips to help pupils appreciate the threat to endangered species, and pupils using the internet to do research and laptops to draft, edit and improve their writing. A few teachers still spend too much time talking and this slows the pace of learning in their lessons. Despite the higher expectations of pupils, especially during the introductory parts of lessons, there is still not a consistently good level of challenge for those pupils who are capable of achieving more. Despite the adequate support for pupils with special educational needs, practical resources are not always

used to support the teaching and learning of mathematical concepts. Furthermore, support staff are not encouraged to focus enough on key vocabulary at the beginning of their sessions with the groups of pupils they support. Consequently, they do not routinely encourage pupils to apply their phonics to read and write new and unfamiliar words across the curriculum. There is too little time spent on ensuring that pupils with a limited vocabulary fully understand the meaning of key words. This reduces the effectiveness of support staff in maximising the learning and progress made by pupils of lower ability and some pupils with special educational needs in class-based lessons. This also reflects a shortcoming within teachers' planning, as all too often, key words are not identified in lesson plans. Furthermore, the language and literacy needs, often included within individual education plans, are not highlighted sufficiently in teachers' planning. There is, nonetheless, more detail within teachers' planning about the intended progression of skills for most other pupils.

Teachers often repeat to pupils what they will be learning, but do not check that pupils can recall and articulate for themselves the learning objectives. All pupils have been provided with reading targets. While this is helpful for most pupils, not all fully understand the meaning of their targets. Furthermore, few teachers remind pupils to refer to their targets. Teachers encourage pupils to review and assess their work to consider how they can improve it. This strategy is done most effectively when pupils are provided with helpful checklists to support them with their assessments. However, few classes have checklists that are sufficiently comprehensive to enable those pupils of lower ability to check they have applied, for example, their basic literacy skills correctly. Although teachers' marking continues to improve, a minority of pupils still report that their teachers do not mark their work in sufficiently good time. This reduces the impact that teachers' comments have on pupils' subsequent pieces of work. Pupils are now provided with time to reflect on their teachers' comments, but this time is not always used productively in all classes.

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

The vast majority of pupils are polite and respectful; they pay attention during lessons and help each other. However, their enthusiasm for learning wanes when teachers talk at length, when the work is not challenging or when their needs are not being well met. Parents and carers, pupils and staff all report improvements to behaviour. Changes to the organisation and activities in the playground have led to more enjoyable playtimes and fewer disputes. However, some pupils do not agree that a whole class should be penalized because of a few pupils who at times find it difficult to behave. Some pupils are of the view that rewards are occasionally used inappropriately to appease and help manage undesirable behaviour while the efforts and good behaviour of others are left unrecognised and unrewarded.

Rates of attendance continue to rise and are currently high.

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

The headteacher has been effective in helping the school to clear its deficit budget.

The quality of improvement plans is improving; these include a greater focus on the intended outcomes for pupils, and there are more progress review points. However, there are still too few interim milestones against which progress can be measured. Although senior leaders are becoming increasingly effective in leading and managing the school, they are still not holding year leaders and subject leaders sufficiently to account, especially about how their work is contributing to improvements in the school. This, as well as the remaining shortcomings of school evaluation, limits the school's ability to demonstrate that it has the capacity to sustain improvement.

Leadership and management responsibilities are being shared more widely amongst staff. Consequently, core subject leaders and some foundation subject leaders have undertaken monitoring activities within their area of responsibility. However, school evaluations, although more frequent, are still not sufficiently robust and accurate to help inform and drive subsequent improvement. Furthermore, they do not all include clear judgements about the performance of the school in relation to the achievement of different groups of pupils or the quality of teaching and how this impacts on the learning and progress of pupils. The format and the quality of whole-school self-evaluation are not fit for purpose.

There is now closer monitoring of the impact of intervention strategies and the quality of the work of support staff. However, monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of teaching and support staff in relation to special educational needs is not always well rooted in the impact on pupils' learning and development. Nevertheless, monitoring activities, including by senior leaders, have identified training needs for teaching and support staff and this is slowly but surely helping to improve practice. The support and guidance provided to newly qualified teachers in the school is enabling them to continue to make good progress with their practice.

Under new leadership, the governing body has become more rigorous, systematic and challenging. It now has a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Key policies and documents, such as those relating to child protection, are being systematically reviewed and revised. However, the governing body has not yet monitored and recorded formally its review of the school's accessibility plan and the impact of the school's policy on equality of opportunity.

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

- Increase the effectiveness of the school's leaders and the governing body in driving school improvement – satisfactory.

## **External support**

The local authority has reduced the amount of guidance and support it provides the school as part of the strategy to help prepare the school to come out of special measures. There is an appropriate level of challenge and support given the school's progress and current position. The effective support provided to staff in relation to mathematics has contributed to the accelerated progress now being made in this subject across the school.

Written feedback to the school from the local authority has been timely, clear and accurate. This enhances the governing body's ability to challenging the school, for example, about the progress being made by different groups of pupils and about the quality of teaching and learning.