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Mrs D Anderson
Headteacher
Meredith Infant School
Portchester Road
Portsmouth
PO2 7JB

Dear Mrs Anderson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Meredith Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 19–20 June 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 second 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 – 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

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 second monitoring inspection on 19–20 June 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. In addition, there were many informal conversations with pupils at break and lunchtimes.

Context

The leadership structure of the school has been changed radically. The interim headteacher left before Easter and an executive headteacher took up her post on 16 April 2012 with a contract for four terms. She retains the headship of another local school but most of her time is committed to Meredith. When she is not in school, an executive deputy headteacher, who is the deputy at the executive headteacher's original school, provides leadership. A deputy headteacher has been appointed on a temporary contract for three days a week to cover the maternity leave of the substantive deputy headteacher. She has only just taken up this post with a brief to develop the curriculum. An inclusion manager has been seconded from a local school to work three days a week. She took up her post on 16 April 2012 and has a contract for four terms. Finally, an Early Years Foundation Stage leader has been appointed full time and will take up her post in September 2012.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Outcomes for pupils are improving in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's reliable assessment information indicates that gaps with national averages are likely to be at least closed in reading and mathematics. Improvement in writing is not so robust but the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 is increasing. Pupils engage with a wider range of writing tasks and are more confident writers. Collaborative planning gives coherence to the curriculum and pupils' experience of it. Further development of topic work is planned in the autumn term.

Thorough moderation of assessments is deepening teachers' understanding of progression in subjects. The work scrutinised in lessons corroborates the rising standards evident in the school's data. The system for tracking pupils' progress has been reviewed and the progress of groups as well as individuals is monitored. Any underachievement is detected swiftly and well-targeted interventions accelerate progress.

Assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been insecure and misleading. This is being tackled rigorously to establish an accurate baseline of the skills, knowledge and understanding that children join the school with.

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

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

The quality of teaching

The environment for learning is bright and well organised. Displays are of a higher standard and support pupils' learning effectively. The role-play areas that have been developed in each classroom promote creativity and independence. Working walls help pupils to recognise success and make connections in their learning. Teaching is improving. Of the 10 lessons observed, in six, pupils' achievement and teaching were satisfactory, and in four, they were good. The proportion of teaching that is good is increasing and most of the satisfactory teaching that was observed is closer to good than inadequate. Where pupils achieved well, teachers included a range of activities that captured pupils' interest. Pupils were clear about the purpose of lessons, understood the success criteria and could recognise their progress in relation to them. An effective pace was sustained through the good use of time checks and energetic exposition. Questioning was used well to probe understanding and expose gaps in pupils' learning.

There are inconsistencies in practice, and, while rising, expectations for work, including its presentation, and pupils' work ethic could be higher in some instances. Not all teachers are equally effective in using assessment information to plan lessons that build systematically on pupils' prior learning.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on 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 – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are happy at school and feel safe and cared for. They have confidence in staff. In conversations, they said that any incidents of bullying were dealt with quickly and well. The school's records show that harassment of any kind is rare. Sometimes, a few pupils play too boisterously but supervision is effective and pupils respond at once when checked. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their improving attendance. Figures for this term show attendance coming into line with national averages. Lateness to school remains an issue but staff work hard with pupils, and parents and carers, to secure improvement.

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

- Improve attendance and punctuality throughout the school – satisfactory.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new, restructured senior leadership team works cohesively. The executive headteacher gives strong and clear direction. She has got to grips with the strengths and weaknesses of the school quickly. Key systems have been reviewed and improved. Policies and expectations have been clarified. The monitoring of teaching is systematic and rigorous. The setting of challenging targets and accurate self-evaluation is driving up standards.

Staff morale has improved significantly. Whatever their role, staff are unified and committed to the common enterprise of improving outcomes for pupils. Teachers understand their accountability for pupils' progress and feel well supported. There have been good opportunities for professional development focused on improving the quality of teaching. Arrangements for performance management are clear and underperformance has been tackled resolutely.

Governance is strengthening. There have been new appointments to the governing body with only one vacancy remaining. Roles and responsibilities have been clarified. The reviewed committee structure links with the improvement priorities that are set out in the appropriately refocused school improvement plan. The governing body is better organised and informed, and, consequently, more effective in supporting and challenging the school.

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

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

External support

Support from the local authority has a beneficial impact. The executive headteacher and education officer work together effectively. The combination of external and internal monitoring and professional development accelerates the pace of improvement.