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28 June 2012

Ms K Luxford  
Headteacher  
Sandown School  
Golf Road  
Deal  
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Dear Ms Luxford

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sandown School**

Following my visit with Ann Short, Additional Inspector, to your school on 26–27 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2012. 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 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 Kent.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Hodge

**Additional Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2012

- Improve leadership and management by:
  - establishing greater challenge by the governing body
  - rigorously monitoring and revisiting lessons to eradicate inadequate teaching, checking that pupils are thoroughly engaged and inspired
  - closely monitoring the impact of strategies to accelerate progress of all groups, especially boys, those known to be eligible for free school meals, and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
  - providing appropriate training to staff in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics
  - improving the planned curriculum and increasing resources.
  
- Improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in English to good by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should do, ensuring that work is planned to meet pupils' differing abilities
  - improving the teaching of phonics (the way sounds and letters are linked), especially at Key Stage 1
  - ensuring that boys are challenged and excited by reading and writing
  - ensuring that teachers mark pupils' written work effectively, so the pupils know exactly how to improve their skills
  - helping pupils to edit, extend and improve their writing more often
  - linking reading and writing more with visits, visitors and other subjects.
  
- Urgently accelerate pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in mathematics by:
  - ensuring a progressive approach to the teaching of calculation skills
  - checking carefully that pupils know and use their targets for improvement
  - ensuring work is matched to pupils' abilities
  - making sure the pupils practise, know and understand their times table and use jottings to show different methods of calculation
  - providing more interesting real-life problem-solving across the curriculum
  - ensuring older pupils have a good understanding about decimals and percentages.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Sandown School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 26-27 June 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, met with the headteacher, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, other senior and middle leaders, and a representative from the local authority. The inspector held discussions with pupils from across the school as they worked in their classrooms, and met with a small group of pupils separately. During this visit, the headteacher and deputy headteacher jointly observed two lessons, and 14 lessons were observed overall.

#### **Context**

Following the last inspection, the newly appointed headteacher was seconded to the school on a temporary basis before taking up the post full time from April. The acting deputy headteacher has since been appointed full time to the post. One class teacher has left the school. A new Chair of the Governing Body was elected soon after the inspection.

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

Pupils' achievement is improving. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from the wide range of activities provided for them. Early reading, writing and number skills are catered for through simple activities, such as writing invitations, taking orders at the class cafe or reading the tour guide's notes in their London-themed role-play area. Early reading skills are encouraged well through learning letter sounds and combinations (known as phonics).

In Years 1 to 6, the improvements are most noticeable in the levels reached in the latest national tests, which are an improvement over previous years, particularly in mathematics and writing. The improvements have not been so marked in reading, particularly for those pupils in Years 1 and 2, where pupils are still not as confident as they could be in reading unfamiliar texts. The better teaching of phonics has not translated into more secure outcomes for pupils, particularly boys, but there are some signs that younger pupils are more enthusiastic about their reading generally. Pupils' writing has improved through the school. Pupils, particularly boys, readily recorded their thoughts and observations when they had to investigate an imaginary crime scene in a Year 6 lesson. Past work indicates that pupils are not always accurate in spelling words or writing at length, but increasingly their writing is used to good effect in topics ranging from the Second World War to Olympic-themed topics. There is some evidence that pupils edit and review their work, although not extensively.

The Olympic Games provide a good stimulus for both writing activities and mathematical investigations. For example, pupils were accurate at ranking the different race times of athletes to practise their knowledge of decimals, and were looking forward to building an Olympic tower when investigating perimeters of objects and shapes. These activities help pupils to apply their skills in 'real-life' situations and for valid purposes. Although pupils' calculation skills are improving, there are still too many instances of pupils through the school who are not confident in calculating simple addition and subtraction facts. This hinders their ability to check answers worked out in books or on whiteboards. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make better progress, although, along with other pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable or who are known to be eligible for free school meals, this progress is sometimes inconsistent and it is taking some time to compensate for some past underachievement.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- Raise pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in English – satisfactory
- Urgently accelerate pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching in mathematics – satisfactory

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching now has a greater proportion of good features than were found at the last inspection. Staff have benefited from intense support of both senior leaders and others beyond the school, such as local authority advisers and through links with other local primary schools to observe good practice. This has resulted in teachers having a greater understanding of what makes successful learning in promoting pupils' writing, reading and mathematics, and in making individual teachers more accountable for progress of pupils in their class. Teaching has benefited by enhanced resources, such as those designed to accelerate pupils' reading abilities. Several pupils commented favourably, particularly boys, who found the approach very motivating. Specific help in improving the teaching of phonics and calculation is starting to be beneficial in improving pupils' learning, and although often now technically correct, teachers are not always as confident in being able to make these activities exciting as well as accurate. Teachers are increasingly raising their expectations of what pupils are capable of, but this is still too inconsistent through the school so not all pupils are fully stretched in their learning and work rate. While teachers create opportunities to encourage pupils' spoken abilities with 'talk partners' to discuss their work, the length and quality of discussions can be relatively short and lacking in depth.

Assessment routines, particularly through the setting of targets, is a more notable feature found within lessons. Pupils say they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, and although some targets are sometimes written in 'educational

language', the general view of pupils is that they prove to be helpful in guiding them on how to improve their work. Teachers' marking is regular, although sometimes it is inconsistent in the way it provides comments that help pupils improve their future efforts.

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

Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and their behaviour has continued to improve, building on those features noted at the last inspection. In lessons, pupils are attentive and willing to listen, although on occasions become distracted if explanations are too lengthy or tasks are not quite matched to their abilities. Around the school and at playtimes, pupils readily engage in a wide range of simple activities, such as catching, throwing or running games. Pupils say they feel safe both in school and while using computers as they are well aware of e-safety guidelines designed to help them avoid any problems when on the internet. They say that any incidences of bullying are quite rare and that staff are vigilant in tackling any instances should they occur. Attendance rates have also improved since the last inspection.

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

Senior leaders reacted quickly to the findings of the last inspection. They quickly reviewed priorities, particularly those that related to teaching, which has helped improve teaching from the previously inadequate levels. An initiative where teachers carry out joint observations known as 'monitoring pairs' has been instrumental in helping staff to identify stronger and weaker aspects of each other's teaching. The early appointment of the deputy headteacher has proved to be successful in aiding the school's capacity to implement improvement more quickly. An early review of target setting in the school has proved beneficial for most pupils, although some pupils have a greater awareness than others of how these can help them improve.

A more in-depth analysis of information on pupils' progress helps both senior leaders and members of the governing body identify weaknesses. For example, there is now greater clarity about the progress of different groups within the school and this enables senior staff to target help with greater precision. There are early signs that progress for these pupils is improving, albeit at a slower rate than for the majority. Nonetheless, the monitoring of teaching, which is now more rigorous and frequent, highlights those areas of teaching which still need to be tackled in order to accelerate pupils' progress more quickly. The curriculum is being reviewed to increasingly good effect, particularly in regards to phonics teaching and in calculation work, and this is starting to help teachers become more confident in their practice. However, the school recognises that opportunities to extend pupils' writing and number skills across all areas of the curriculum are sometimes missed.

The governing body has been quick to respond to the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. Policies and procedures were reviewed quickly and to good effect. Members of the governing body undertake monitoring in pairs to gauge progress in tackling and remedying key weaknesses. Meetings held between the mathematics coordinator and members of the governing body have proved fruitful in identifying strengths and future priorities in action planning. Members have well-advanced plans to extend this to literacy and other coordinators. Members of the governing body continue to ensure that safeguarding, including the vetting of staff appointments, is carried out rigorously, and their greater awareness of how different groups of pupils are performing enables them to challenge senior leaders in how they are reducing differences in pupils' attainment.

### **External support**

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose and provides an appropriate framework for action. Constant and positive support is provided by the local authority through the provision of external consultants, particularly to raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. However, the greatest effect has been seen in the support and guidance to senior leaders and the governing body. For example, the new Chair of the Governing Body has benefited from having an experienced mentor from another school and senior leaders are more confident in monitoring teaching. Some of the immediate actions identified in the statement of action have been effectively carried out and make a good contribution to school improvement, particularly in regard in helping staff develop their technical expertise, such as the teaching of phonics.