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5 July 2012

Paul Lailey  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Lailey

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sheepscombe Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 3–4 July 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 January 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 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 Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Jane Neech

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that assessments of pupils' learning provide a reliable and accurate basis for measuring their progress and planning the next steps
  - making better use of learning time during the school day, ensuring that in afternoon sessions there is time to complete activities.
  
- Ensure that by January 2013 all teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and most is good by:
  - making sure that the work planned meets the needs of all pupils
  - raising teachers' expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work
  - monitoring pupils' progress in reading more closely
  - routinely providing pupils with feedback about their achievements and next steps during lessons and through marking in books
  - sharing the features of good teaching.
  
- Develop the capacity of staff and governors to understand and use information about pupils' progress and school performance to bring about improvements to teaching and achievement.

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

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 3–4 July 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The lead inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, staff, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body, and governors representing parents and carers and the community. A telephone discussion was held with a consultant headteacher who is supporting the school. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector observed an assembly, and four lessons jointly with the headteacher. The lead inspector talked to pupils at playtime and in lessons, and looked at pupils' work and teachers' marking in English and mathematics books from each class.

#### **Context**

Since the last inspection, there have been changes in staffing. The part-time teacher formerly in the mixed-age Reception and Key Stage 1 class has left and a new full-time teacher has joined the school. All other teachers are part time. The school is led by an executive headteacher who is also the headteacher of a neighbouring small school. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. There is also a Nursery class with eight full-time equivalent places. At the time of the monitoring visit, the Nursery was led by a temporary teacher. Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were away from school, attending a residential camp accompanied by two part-time teachers. The numbers of pupils in each year group are very small.

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

The performance of pupils in Key Stage 2 is variable. Recent teacher assessments show that pupils in Year 6 achieve well in English and mathematics. School data show that in reading over half the pupils achieved higher levels in National Curriculum tests. This is because pupils' progress accelerates at the end of Key Stage 2. However, this good progress is not the case for all pupils across the school. Work in English and mathematics books shows that standards reached by pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 are still too low. Where standards are better, the gaps in performance between boys and girls are narrowing. Pupils' written work shows a good understanding of a range of writing styles. For example, in an English lesson focusing on writing a play script, some pupils were able to transpose a story into present tense dialogue when creating the script. This is because the teacher used her knowledge of pupils' prior learning to set more challenging tasks for a particular group. However, other pupils produced a limited amount of work because the assessment of pupils' prior learning is not yet fully embedded in planning the next steps in their learning.

Pupils in the mixed Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 class generally achieve in line with national expectations. The very small numbers of pupils in Year 2 make statistical comparisons from National Curriculum tests unreliable. Observations of lessons show that Key Stage 1 pupils can apply their knowledge of phonics (the sounds letters make in words) when reading. Parents and carers report that their children enjoy reading the new books recently purchased by the school. In lessons, pupils read confidently and most are making the expected progress.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage show skills in early numeracy. In an adult-led activity, pupils matched numbers to a sequence of pictures after talking about the correct order to get undressed for physical education. Children in the Nursery join in with songs and rhymes, and show a good level of communication skills. However, the assessment of the Nursery and Reception children's ongoing progress is unreliable, because there are too few planned opportunities for adults to observe them playing and learning independently. Consequently, adults are not yet building up an accurate basis for measuring children's progress. The school recognises there are currently limited opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to the assessment of their children's ongoing progress. Consequently, there are plans in place to support practitioners further in addressing these issues.

The successes since the last inspection have been the accelerated progress of older pupils in English and mathematics, the beginnings of the use of assessment related to pupils' prior knowledge and better use of learning time so that pupils are able to complete activities. However, progress remains variable. Progress overall in writing and mathematics has been slower than in reading. Currently, there are some pockets of improvement, such as writing in Key Stage 1, but some pupils in the rest of the school are not yet making as much progress as pupils in Year 5 and Year 6.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement – satisfactory

### **The quality of teaching**

Since the last inspection, the school has concentrated on developing a consistent approach to the structure of lessons and, in this, the staff have generally been successful. Lessons begin with a clear learning objective and success criteria, which are shared with the pupils. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils were able to explain what they needed to include in their writing when creating instructions, such as 'bossy' words in the form of verbs. In the main parts of lessons, pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs are generally well supported. However, during the introductory parts of lessons, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to challenge higher-attaining pupils through probing questions. The most effective planning matches the tasks to the specific needs of groups and individuals. However, the school acknowledges that the planning of activities does not link to National Curriculum levels and so opportunities for a greater challenge in the learning tasks are sometimes missed.

During lessons, teachers provide individuals and groups with feedback on their work. Teaching assistants sensitively encourage pupils to persevere with their work and this builds pupils' confidence in learning. At the end of lessons, teachers routinely ask pupils how well they think they have done. In this way, pupils are becoming more aware of assessing their own performance. Pupils report they are 'getting on well' in English and mathematics. However, they are less sure of their targets related to National Curriculum levels and what they need to do to move to the next level.

There is now a more consistent approach to marking pupils' work. The most effective marking gives pupils advice on how to improve their work, for example in mathematics, checking calculations for accuracy. A particular favourite with pupils is the introduction of 'Mr Punctuation Head'. One pupil reported that 'Mr Punctuation Head' was used every day and helped with understanding the correct punctuation. However, marking comments are not consistently related to National Curriculum levels or targets and there is too little opportunity for pupils to respond to teachers' marking.

While the quality of teaching, marking and use of assessment has improved since the last inspection, some work planned is not sufficiently challenging to meet the needs of all pupils.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection – satisfactory

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

Pupils generally behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They enjoy working together and are keen to discuss their work with a partner. In lessons, pupils settle to tasks well. Reception class children invite each other to join in with activities, such as making models. They socialise well and carry out conversations with each other, such as giving opinions about favourite colours. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, and parents and carers report that their children enjoy school.

Attendance overall is generally in line with national averages. However, punctuality is not always as good as it could be and, at times, pupils' lateness has a negative impact on the school's attendance figures.

Relationships are positive. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and to whom they should talk if they have a worry or concern. Attitudes to learning are positive and this is beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' progress in some lessons.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection – satisfactory

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

The executive headteacher is beginning to develop a concerted approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning. This is reflected in the way in which teachers now structure their lessons and are beginning to use assessment of pupils' prior learning to plan lessons. A key development since the last inspection has been the improvements made to the learning environment for the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, the provision for children to learn and play outside meets their needs. However, planning the balance between activities which are led by adults and those initiated by children is in its early stages. Consequently, children have less opportunity to follow their own learning interests. The school recognises that the continuity in learning opportunities and use of assessment between the Nursery and the Reception group of children in the mixed Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 class has yet to be established.

The curriculum in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 provides some exciting opportunities to explore and investigate the natural environment. For example, regular visits to a local National Trust centre develop pupils' skills in science, geography and art, as well as their knowledge about plants and animals in the local environment. Assemblies give pupils the time to reflect on social and moral issues. Parents and carers praise the uniqueness of the school in being a small family, and they are right in their assertions that everyone gets along well together. The newly established vision, which involved the whole-school community in its creation, sets out a shared vision of equality, so that every pupil succeeds academically and personally within a nurturing environment.

A key strength now in the leadership and management of the school is the work of the governors. The governing body is led by an experienced chair. The mix of new and established governors has quickly and proactively risen to the challenge of leading and managing a school in special measures. Governors have an accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Through effective support from the local authority, they have received timely and appropriate training. As a result, governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in supporting and challenging the school to raise standards. Members of the governing body have invested time and effort in engaging with the school and local community, and are confident of the support that the school has locally.

Leaders and managers recognise that the school is in the early stages of involving all staff in driving improvement. School improvement planning and actions for improving outcomes for pupils are generally well considered but currently lack a regular review and analysis by all staff. As a result, opportunities for staff to use information about school performance to develop their leadership roles and support improvements in teaching and achievement are just beginning.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection – satisfactory

## **External support**

The local authority statement of action meets requirements. The executive headteacher is well supported by senior representatives from the local authority who lead the Intervention Project Group. They recognise the challenges facing the headteacher as a leader of two schools. Consequently, the local authority has been quick to put actions in place, such as arranging for a consultant headteacher and experienced staff to support leadership and management, and teaching and learning.