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12 July 2012

Mrs Gill Ellis  
Acting Head of School  
Catshill First School  
Gibb Lane  
Catshill  
Bromsgrove  
B61 0JP

Dear Mrs Ellis

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Catshill First School**

Following my visit to your school on 10–11 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 11 October 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 – good

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed to teach in any year group. This will be reviewed during the next monitoring inspection.

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 Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2011**

- Raise attainment and rapidly accelerate progress for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - making more effective use of assessment information to identify patterns of progress and underachieving groups or individuals
  - ensuring that all pupils understand their learning targets and how to achieve them.
  
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching by:
  - eliminating weaknesses in teaching and ensuring that the large majority of teaching is at least good or better by autumn 2012
  - sharing good practice across all key stages by coaching staff to improve their practice and improving teachers' use of assessment information to plan lessons.
  
- Develop leadership expertise across the school to drive improvement by:
  - holding staff to account for pupils' learning and progress through rigorous monitoring and evaluation
  - ensuring that school improvement planning and monitoring are sharply focused on improving outcomes for pupils.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Catshill First School**

### **Report from the second monitoring inspection on 10-11 July 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the local authority adviser who is now acting head of school in the absence of a permanent headteacher. Meetings were held with the leadership team and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector spoke to some parents and carers and with pupils during lessons. All classes were visited and 11 lessons were inspected, including visits to the school's Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspector met with a group of pupils to hear them read and to check their progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' assessments were scrutinised, along with their workbooks. The school's safeguarding and child protection procedures were checked.

#### **Context**

Since the school's inspection in October 2011, the local authority has brokered additional support for the school by putting in place arrangements to federate with Catshill Middle School by January 2013. The headteacher of the middle school will become the executive headteacher of Catshill First School in September 2012. Additional governors from the middle school have been appointed to augment the governing body of the first school. The local authority adviser attached to the school is currently acting head of school until a permanent head of school is appointed to work alongside the executive headteacher. In addition, two class teachers were appointed in April 2012 to teach the Year 3 and Year 4 classes.

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

Pupils' progress and attainment are rising, reflecting significant improvements in the quality of teaching. Although pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is below average, an increasing proportion in all year groups are reaching or exceeding the levels expected for their age. In mathematics, improvements are slower compared with reading and writing. Pupils' attainment in mathematics remains lower than in English by the end of Year 4.

The acting head of school has implemented effective assessment systems to capture more accurate information about pupils' progress and performance. Assessment data and pupils' work in lessons show that their attainment is edging closer to that expected nationally by the end of Years 2 and 4. The gaps are narrowing with national expectations for significant groups of pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils of average or higher abilities.

The school is reviewing its provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. The leadership team recognises that some of these pupils are not making as much progress as they should. Interventions and booster work are starting to make a difference to pupils with speech and language difficulties. Focused sessions to improve pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) are helping those who struggle with their reading and writing but there remain inconsistencies in their development of literacy skills. These pupils do not always use effective strategies to help them read fluently as they are unable to break down unfamiliar words when reading independently. In mathematics, pupils are not being taught consistent methods of calculation in Years 2 to 4 so that some struggle with basic number operations, especially when problem solving or using number facts mentally.

Children throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to make good progress in all areas of learning. Their attainment by the time they start Year 1 is rising rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics because of consistently good or outstanding teaching. This continues in Year 1 where the teaching is consistently of high quality. Although there remain pockets of underachievement in Years 2 to 4, assessments are sharper and staff are better equipped to identify sooner those pupils who fall behind.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- raise attainment and rapidly accelerate progress for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

Changes to leadership, effective staff appointments and well-focused monitoring, training and support, have eradicated all inadequate teaching. The teaching in Years 3 and 4 in particular has improved well and is accelerating pupils' progress. More teaching is now good or outstanding across the school compared with that found at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Some of the teaching is still only satisfactory because pupils are not given tasks that extend their learning further or the work provided is not always matched to their needs and abilities.

Lessons now have sharper learning objectives for pupils to aim for with clearly defined 'steps to success' that are pointed out to pupils so they understand what to do to reach higher levels. Learning targets are more evident in writing books which pupils understand and are used by them as a reference when checking or editing their writing. This is less consistent in mathematics and results in some pupils falling short of their attainment targets.

The parents and carers spoken to during the inspection said that they had noticed significant improvements and are pleased that staffing is more settled. Pupils are reading and writing more accurately and frequently, although some still struggle

when working independently. In some lessons, pupils are not expected to consolidate, deepen or extend their learning further. The most effective teaching maintains good pace, seamlessly builds on previous learning and places greater demands on pupils. For example, Year 1 pupils were asked quick-fire questions during a mathematics lesson, which were adapted by the teacher for each individual according to their abilities. The lesson built on previous work so the teacher could check if pupils could work out the relative price of shoes in the 'Elves Workshop'. The pupils related to this activity quickly as they had previously read a story and engaged in writing and role play activities using a traditional storybook as inspiration. The teaching is only satisfactory when pupils are not as well engaged, or learning is not as productive because the work is less demanding or repeats what pupils have already learned. Teachers and support staff sometimes ask questions that overly direct pupils towards an answer without expecting them to work things out for themselves. In some mathematics lessons, pupils are not taught the most effective calculation skills or methods to solve number problems.

Teachers' marking has improved well and is now more consistent. A revised marking policy devised by leaders is being implemented well by all staff. Pupils say that they understand what they have to do to improve as one pupil confirmed during a lesson, 'If I have green marks in my book, this means 'green for great', but if it is 'pink for think', I have to check it over again.' The scrutiny of writing books showed that pupils have increasing opportunities to edit and self-correct their writing by checking off each learning objective against their targets.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching – good.

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

Pupils' behaviour remains mainly good. Attendance is in line with the national average and pupils are punctual. Pupils cooperate well in lessons and say that they feel safe. Relationships between pupils and with adults are positive and any form of bullying or harassment is rare. A very small number of pupils get into trouble at lunchtimes as their behaviour worsens in less supervised situations. The school's learning support sessions help those who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. These sessions are managed well by qualified and well-trained support staff and provide pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable with good opportunities to engage in interesting topic work and improve their personal and social skills.

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

The intervention and leadership provided by the executive headteacher and head of school have resulted in more direct and well-focused training and support for teachers. This is developing consistent and effective classroom practice across the

school. Additional experienced members of the governing body from the middle school and the expertise of the acting head of school and executive headteacher have brought a clear sense of direction, purpose and well-needed urgency to school improvement. The newly established senior leadership team and additional members of the governing body have a strong track record in school improvement which is helping both senior and middle leaders to improve their expertise in reviewing pupil and staff performance. Systematic, accurate and robust performance reviews of teaching are being followed up by the acting head of school. Expectations have been raised and the school's action plan includes ambitious targets for teachers to improve their practice. The plan includes target dates that incorporate frequent checks on whether pupils are on course to reach their expected levels of attainment and if the proportion of teaching that is only satisfactory is on track to become good or better.

Teachers and teaching assistants are responding well to the changes and the expectations set by leaders. Improvement planning, training and frequent monitoring have ensured that there is no inadequate teaching. More accessible assessment information provides teachers with the means to check if pupils are on course to reach their learning targets. There remain inconsistencies, however, in the performance of pupils in mathematics and in the effectiveness of the support provided for lower attaining pupils or those who have special educational needs. Leaders are adapting their priorities now to address these as the newly established mathematics coordinator and the acting head of school have already drawn up clear action plans to prioritise these areas of the school's work more closely now that pupils' attainment in English is rising securely across the school.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- develop leadership expertise across the school to drive improvement – good.

### **External support**

The local authority is now making a good contribution. It has put in place effective management arrangements to support the school through special measures. The new leadership structure, using the expertise of leaders and governors from the partner middle school, as well as the appointment of the local authority's adviser as acting head of school, has had an immediate effect on school improvement. The school has a more settled and effective senior leadership team, augmented by experienced leaders and members of the governing body with a strong track record, that are building further capacity for sustained improvement. The expertise of effective practitioners in the local cluster of schools, as well as specialist subject advisers, provides further opportunities for staff training and development. The school's leaders have already benefitted from these as they are now undertaking more accurate and effective performance reviews of teaching and pupils' performance.