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Karen Porteous  
Headteacher  
Barrow Hill Primary School  
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Barrow Hill  
Chesterfield  
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Dear Mrs Porteous

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Barrow Hill Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 19–20 September 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 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 – 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 Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national averages by:
  - regularly monitoring the performance of individual pupils
  - using assessment information to identify where pupils are making insufficient progress
  - providing support for these pupils to ensure their progress improves and is at least good
  - setting achievable but aspirational targets for each individual pupil and closely monitoring their progress towards them.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that it has a greater impact on pupils' learning by:
  - providing a greater level of challenge for each pupil
  - increasing the pace of lessons to accelerate the speed at which pupils learn
  - improving marking so that it informs pupils how to improve their work
  - providing more opportunity for pupils to practise and consolidate new learning
  - making sure that tasks build progressively on what pupils already know
  - ensuring that any repetition of work is kept to a minimum and used for consolidation or revision purposes only.
  
- Improve leadership and management, in particular the monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders and the governing body, by:
  - giving all governors a greater understanding of the school's performance
  - ensuring governors work closely with the senior leaders to evaluate what the school is doing well and where it needs to improve
  - using this evaluation to draw up effective plans for improvement
  - ensuring that monitoring of lessons focuses on the impact that teaching is having on learning
  - using assessment and tracking data more effectively to hold teachers to account for the performance of the pupils in their class through regular pupil performance reviews.
  
- Improve curriculum planning so that pupils' learning progresses systematically as they move through the mixed-age classes by:
  - ensuring that work is planned carefully to provide all pupils in each class with tasks at an appropriate level for their age and ability
  - planning structured opportunities for pupils to practise core skills, particularly reading with understanding, writing for different purposes and problem solving
  - providing better guidance for teachers when planning lessons.

**Special measures: monitoring of Barrow Hill Primary School****Report from the second monitoring inspection on 19–20 September 2012****Evidence**

HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, listened to pupils read and met with the headteacher, members of staff, two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and representatives from the local authority. Nine joint lesson observations were completed with the headteacher.

**Context**

This is a very small primary school with children being taught in three classes with up to four year-groups in each class. Since the previous monitoring visit, the deputy headteacher has been on long-term absence. One teacher has returned after maternity leave and an Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator has been appointed. During the monitoring visit, one class was taught by a temporary teacher.

**Achievement of pupils at the school**

Leaders have worked effectively to establish some essential and previously under-developed systems through which pupils' attainment and achievement can be raised. The three most notable improvements are the good arrangements for encouraging pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons; the strengthening of teachers' approaches to planning lessons; and the compiling of regular and secure information on pupils' attainment and achievement in a way that allows for easy analysis of their progress. Outcomes are shared with teachers at half-termly pupil progress meetings to help them identify those pupils or groups making insufficient progress and provide effective targeted support. This has been particularly successful for older pupils, who have received intensive support to improve their reading comprehension skills. Target setting was at low levels of challenge at the time of the previous monitoring inspection but this has improved recently. Pupils, particularly the older pupils, know their targets and can explain what steps that they have to take to reach them.

Attainment for the oldest pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has improved significantly since the previous monitoring visit, with all pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in the 2012 national tests. Four out of five pupils gained the higher Level 5 in reading. The same success is not mirrored in mathematics, with only one pupil gaining the highest level. Attainment of pupils in Year 2 remains low, with teachers failing to build on what pupils already know and can do. The signs of recovery identified during the previous visit in the Early Years Foundation Stage have gathered pace because children have experienced better teaching and a more appropriate curriculum, particularly in the teaching of early reading skills. Consequently, children's knowledge of the links between sounds and letters has improved.

Attainment information, work scrutiny and lesson observations for pupils in other year groups show that progress in reading, writing and mathematics is variable across classes and much more remains to be done to catch up on pupils' under-achievement from previous years. For example, attainment remains too low for pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3, who have been subject to temporary teaching arrangements.

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

- raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national averages – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching and learning have improved since the previous monitoring visit. An increased proportion of good teaching was observed but inadequate teaching remains. Developing strengths include a better balance between pupils listening to teachers and working independently; improved marking of pupils' work, which identifies the next steps in their learning; and clearly identified learning intentions, context and success criteria in teachers' lesson planning. In the main, lessons are purposeful and appropriately organised. Teaching assistants are suitably deployed to play a full part in the teaching of specific groups. There has been a noticeable improvement in the type and range of activities offered to the pupils. Where the most effective teaching exists, there is a clear focus on developing pupils' thinking through practical tasks which require sustained effort to complete.

Staff have responded well to feedback about their teaching from the headteacher and local authority personnel. Teachers generally plan and set appropriate work for the different ability and year groups within their classes because effective professional development opportunities have raised their expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Their improved understanding of what levels pupils have already attained, and knowledge of how to adapt and modify their planning accordingly, have led to an increased pace of learning and better progress for pupils, particularly those children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, teaching is still not good enough in some year groups to boost pupils' progress, particularly in Years 1, 2 and 3, where the gap between pupils' attainment and that found nationally is not closing quickly enough.

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

- improve the quality of teaching to at least good so that it has a greater impact on pupils' learning – satisfactory.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The improvements to the pupils' attitudes to learning and to school in general have gathered pace. Pupils say they like coming to school and enjoy lessons, particularly the new reading lessons. They are considerate and supportive of each other in lessons and around the school. The school has taken a firm stance on bullying. Policies and procedures have been reviewed and new protocols put into place to inform pupils on how to recognise the different types of bullying and how to respond to any acts of unkind behaviour. The school council has been re-formed so that pupils can take a greater responsibility for themselves and their school. They are particularly pleased to have developed the new individual reward system, which allows pupils to spend award points, gained from success in their learning, in the school's team points shop. Pupils express pride in their success and say that it has increased their motivation to do their best. Attendance remains average.

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

There is clear evidence of improvement since the previous monitoring visit. The three most notable are: the regular and rigorous monitoring, particularly that centred on improving the quality of teaching; the sharp and clear action planning with precise measurable targets; and the secure procedures to evaluate pupils' progress and to eradicate underachievement. Routine monitoring of teachers' planning for English and mathematics ensures that the work planned for all groups of pupils within the mixed-age classes is increasingly meeting their needs.

Well-targeted professional development opportunities, including a systematic approach to teaching about sounds and letters, have had an impact on the attainment and progress of pupils, particularly in reading. Improvement has been secured in pupils' mathematical skills through the introduction of a calculation policy, which is now followed by all staff. However, the improvement has not been as marked as that in English because there are still gaps in pupils' mathematical ability because some teachers' subject knowledge is insecure.

Action taken to ensure that the systematic progression is built into the curriculum has militated against the repetition evident in the school's previous full inspection. However, there are too few opportunities for the teaching of English and mathematics in other subjects allow pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of other contexts. Consequently, pupils are not developing their capacity for sustained writing or in improving their problem-solving and thinking skills.

Governance is improving, strengthened by effective training. The governors have set up several procedures to monitor the work of the school but it is too early to assess the impact of such actions. Governors are fully aware that they are in need of further support so that they understand fully their statutory responsibilities as well how to hold the school to account.

The newly introduced performance management system links closely with the developmental needs of the staff and to the school's improvement plan. The system is used well to broaden teachers' understanding of how to improve the quality of their teaching and to secure improved outcomes for pupils.

The many changes of staff and leadership at the end of last term leave some uncertainty as to how well the current momentum for improvement can be sustained, particularly in Years 1 and 2 where there are temporary arrangements in place. Such changes have meant that the headteacher has taken on all of the strategic leadership roles and the coordination of the main curriculum areas, including English and mathematics.

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

- improve leadership and management, in particular the monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders and the governing body – satisfactory
- improve curriculum planning so that pupils' learning progresses systematically as they move through the mixed-age classes – satisfactory.

### **External support**

The school has benefited from well-judged, good-quality support from the local authority. The focus of additional support has been in relation to strategic leadership and improving the quality of teaching. The local authority has been instrumental in brokering access to good quality professional development opportunities, particularly in the systematic teaching of early reading skills.