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Nicolette Barrand  
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Dear Mrs Barrand

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Thomas Willingale School**

Following my visit with Alan Jarvis to your school on 10–11 October 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 21 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Essex.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve standards in English and mathematics by:
  - making sure all groups of pupils and especially boys make consistently good or better progress in all lessons to eradicate underachievement
  - ensuring that tasks in lessons are sufficiently challenging and fully meet the needs of pupils
  - providing clear targets for pupils on what they need to do next to improve.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school by ensuring that teachers:
  - use assessment information effectively to plan lessons that fully cater for the needs of all pupils
  - use time, resources and information and communication technology effectively to motivate and inspire pupils in lessons
  - provide opportunities for pupils to work with each other and be more active in their learning.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - developing leadership expertise across the school
  - establishing effective monitoring and evaluation practices by all those with leadership and management responsibilities
  - using data effectively to track the progress of pupils and set challenging targets for improvement
  - implementing plans for the promotion of community cohesion within a local, national and international context
  - fully engaging members of the governing body in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and holding school leaders to account.
  
- Ensure that all statutory requirements are fulfilled related to the staffing arrangements for provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Thomas Willingale School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 10–11 October 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, phase leaders, subject co-ordinators, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair and members of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection there have been a large number of staff changes. In the nursery two teachers have been appointed who job-share this role, in reception two teachers have been appointed one of whom is the phase leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a newly qualified teacher in Year 1. There are new teachers in Year 2 and Year 5. There is a new teacher, who has been appointed phase leader, in Year 6. Three part-time teachers now cover teachers' preparation and planning time. A new special educational needs co-ordinator took up her post in September.

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

The school's own data, and inspection evidence from lesson observations and looking at pupils' work, show that pupils in Key Stage 2 made fast progress last year, standards improved and that boys are catching up with girls. Taking account of the pupils' low starting points because of previously inadequate teaching and leadership, the proportions of pupils making better than expected progress in both English and mathematics compares favourably with national outcomes from 2011 validated data. However, in some lessons observed, more-able pupils are not always given work that is hard enough for them, and where this is the case, do not always do as well as they could. In Key Stage 1 pupils are making good progress. However, due to the previously inadequate teaching and leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage, they have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding which mean their attainment does not compare favourably with similar pupils nationally. Although the mainly good teaching seen during the inspection is helping these pupils to catch up, boys are still not doing as well as girls.

The pace of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the last monitoring inspection. This is due to better planning of activities that allow children to learn and better teaching. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs made good progress in the lessons observed during the inspection. This was due to the good support they received. However, the new special needs co-ordinator

is rightly concerned that some pupils are not making enough progress from where they started. She is looking at other ways of helping them do better.

### Judgement

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

- improve standards in English and mathematics – good.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring inspection and is good in most lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2. This is leading to better results for most pupils. Teachers are better at explaining clearly and simply to pupils what they need to learn, as in a Year 1 lesson where pupils were learning the difference between odd and even numbers. They are also better at designing tasks that help all pupils to gain new knowledge or skills by the end of the lesson, whatever their starting point. Teachers give clear examples and explain ideas carefully so that pupils know exactly what they are expected to do. This means they can get straight down to work. Pupils are encouraged to share their ideas with a partner at the start of the lesson so that everyone is included and kept alert and active. Teaching assistants have had good quality training and as a result know what their role is and how to help pupils improve. Teachers brief them carefully and this helps them to give much better support to pupils in lessons. However, the teaching of more-able pupils requires improvement. They are not always given hard enough work, or reminded by the teacher to use the knowledge and skills they already have to work things out for themselves. However, pupils sometimes help each other to improve. For example, one Year 3 pupil told his work partner, 'You are wasting time.' When asked to explain, he pointed out that his partner was 'counting out 10 times six' on his fingers rather than using his knowledge of the 10 times table to get the answer as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The marking of pupils' work has improved. Pupils say they understand their teacher's comments and the next steps they need to take to improve their work. This is particularly the case in Year 3 and 4 where teachers have been trying out a new marking policy. This new approach will now be used across the school.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since the previous monitoring inspection and is no longer inadequate. There is a good range of exciting and interesting learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. The new approach to home-school learning is beginning to support parents' understanding of how their young children learn best and learning journeys are a good record of progress from children's starting points. However, teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage still requires further improvement. This is because teachers' planning does not always give other adults enough guidance on what

questions to ask pupils, or set out the purpose of activities clearly enough. As a result, the adults do not spend long enough talking with individuals or groups to help them learn.

### Judgement

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school – good

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

The school's safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements and new staff are included on the single central register. Behaviour around the school and on the playground is good. Behaviour seen in class is also good because pupils enjoy lessons and have good attitudes to learning. They work well with a partner and collaborate well in small groups. Where tasks are not demanding enough, pupils occasionally lose focus and do not work as well as they could.

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

Due to the excellent leadership of the headteacher, the school has made good improvement since it was placed in special measures. Her determination and unrelenting focus on providing the best education for the pupils has resulted in better teaching and pupils are getting better results. Staff have a great deal of confidence in her and recognise how many improvements have been made since last year. However, these improvements are fragile because middle leaders are still developing their roles. For example, they have started a number of projects to improve pupils' achievement but have not yet demonstrated that they are making a difference. Joint observations carried out during this monitoring inspection show that middle leaders have a good understanding of what good teaching and learning should be, but have little experience of giving constructive and detailed feedback to teachers to help them to improve. Also there are a lot of new staff and middle leaders have not yet had time to see them all teach.

The new special needs co-ordinator has carried out a thorough review of the special needs register and is carefully monitoring provision in every class. She already knows the children's needs well and has a clear action plan for further improvement. The phase leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage is at a very early stage of reviewing planning for children in the nursery and reception classes. However, all statutory requirements related to staffing in the nursery and reception classes are now met.

Governance has improved since the school was placed in special measures but still requires improvement. The Chair of the Governing Body gives a very robust lead and has a clear idea of what needs to be done to improve how governors challenge as well as support the school. Plans are in place to reconstitute the governing body so that all members have a key part to play in school life. The governor responsible for community cohesion is working with the headteacher to make sure pupils have opportunities to link with different types of school both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

### Judgement

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

- improve the quality of leadership and management – good
  
- ensure that all statutory requirements are fulfilled related to the staffing arrangements for provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage – good.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to give good support to the school both through its advisory staff and the link with the local leader in education. However, the local authority review in September was not well received by the school and initially left staff somewhat demoralised. The written report has a much more positive tone and recognises the improvements that the school has made.