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23 November 2012

Mrs A MacCallum  
The Headteacher  
Elson Infant School  
Elson Lane  
Gosport  
PO12 4EU

Dear Mrs MacCallum

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Elson Infant School**

Following my visit with Michael Pye, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 November 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Hampshire County Council.

Yours sincerely

John Seal  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Significantly improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that at least the majority of children reach a good level of development by:
  - ensuring there is effective leadership and management for all staff working in Reception
  - identifying correctly the additional needs of vulnerable pupils and those at risk of underachieving early on in Reception
  - producing an action plan which communicates high expectations for all staff and children and includes challenging targets
  - ensuring that lesson planning specifies the intended learning outcomes, including key vocabulary, for all the required areas of learning
  - ensuring that all staff help children to focus on their learning
  - encourage children to practise the skills they have learnt in the activities they choose for themselves.
- Raise the achievement of all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for boys, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, so that all make expected progress and reach at least the levels expected for their age by:
  - ensuring there is rigorous and systematic daily teaching of letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) for all pupils and that pupils are encouraged to use and apply their phonic skills when reading and writing across the curriculum
  - increasing pupils' subject specific vocabulary in mathematics
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that a substantial and increasing proportion of teaching is good or better by:
  - making sure teachers take responsibility for meeting the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and for this to be reflected in their planning
  - structuring lessons in a way that enables all pupils to work independently ensuring there is a good pace of learning by increasing the level of challenge for the more able pupils so that their knowledge, skills and understanding progress well
  - providing regular opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas before they start writing
  - embedding the use of assessment strategies during lessons so that teachers check more regularly and accurately the learning and progress being made by different groups of pupils.
- Ensuring that leaders, managers and the governing body become effective in driving and embedding improvements throughout the school, by:
  - developing the role of governors so that they hold the school to account for the progress made by different groups of learners and contribute more effectively to the strategic direction of the school

- developing the role of middle managers so that they are proactive in leading their areas of responsibility in line with the school's priorities
- improving the quality of action plans so that they all specify how initiatives will impact on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils
- ensuring that all action plans include success criteria that are measurable, so that progress can be checked at regular intervals
- making sure that self-evaluation is rooted in evidence about the impact that actions are having on the development, learning and progress of different groups of pupils.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 November 2012**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Two teachers are on temporary contracts in Years 1 and 2 covering for the long-term illness of permanent staff. Two additional governors have been appointed to the governing body by the local authority. One of them has been recently appointed as Chair.

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

The unvalidated national assessment results for 2012 indicate that, by the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics, although improved, were still below the national average.

The school's information about current pupils' achievement, work observed in classes and in pupils' books indicates that a higher proportion of pupils than in previous years is working at nationally expected levels. Children in Reception have settled in well. Their development in most areas of learning is improving steadily, although their knowledge and skills for reading and writing are slightly lower than expected for their age. Different groups of pupils, which include those who have been identified as having disabilities and/or special educational needs and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, are making better progress than at the time of the last inspection. As a result, the gaps between their attainment and that seen nationally are beginning to narrow.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving. There are some effective characteristics which are common to most lessons. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good enough to increase pupils' rates of progress towards reaching, or exceeding, the nationally expected standards.

These are the key features of teaching.

- Clear learning objectives help pupils understand what they need to do.
- Activities are planned at the right level to challenge more pupils to make better progress. This is especially the case for the more able pupils.
- Good questioning skills are used more frequently to help pupils think about their work more clearly and carefully.

- Pupils are encouraged to talk about their mathematics activities using the appropriate vocabulary. As a result, more pupils are improving their mathematical skills and understanding during lessons.
- Pupils enjoy teachers marking their work using the colours 'green for growth' and 'yippee yellow' which highlight what they are doing well and where they need to improve further.
- More pupils are beginning to be reminded about what steps to take to improve further during lessons. Those pupils who require more structured support, including those who are disabled and/or have special educational needs, do not consistently receive this information.
- Regular sessions have started to take place for pupils to practise identifying and using different letter sounds and words (phonics). During these whole class lessons, not enough attention is given to some pupils who need additional support.
- Interesting themes and resources are increasingly being used to stimulate pupils' interest in writing. This includes more time for more pupils to talk and discuss their ideas. However, not enough pupils are producing extended pieces of work.
- Activities that develop pupils' skills in accessing resources and information, without having to rely on other adults, are more apparent in Reception and in Years 1 and 2, but are not consistent features of all lessons.
- Observations and assessments of children in Reception happen more frequently. This has improved teachers' planning for the required areas of learning and key vocabulary. However, assessments in key areas of learning are not recorded regularly.

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

Pupils behave well and they have positive attitudes towards their learning. They come to school on time and their attendance is high. They get on well with each other and the adults who work with them. Pupils are very responsive to each other and teachers' instructions.

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

Senior leaders and managers, including the governing body, are becoming more effective in how they are working to improve the school. The plans for improvement, in conjunction with the local authority's support, are clear and accurately based on information gathered from regular classroom observations, teachers' planning and pupils' work. Targets for higher levels of attainment and rates of progress for all pupils are set and generally the targets and milestones are becoming more ambitious. However, some of the short-term targets set for Year 1 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics are not sufficiently challenging to ensure they are on track for them to meet or exceed the standards required for the end of Year 2. In addition, planned actions are not directly linked to specific targets relating to different groups of pupils in Reception and in Years 1 and 2. This hinders the school's ability to gauge the exact impact of all its work. The governing body meets regularly and is business like in its approach to checking how well the school is

doing. Governors are beginning to ask appropriately challenging questions about the school's performance and improvement since the inspection. They regularly visit the school to meet with senior leaders and teachers. Middle leaders are starting to monitor of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching more regularly but are still in the early stages of doing so. Since her appointment at the start of November, the new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage has ensured the staff work well as a team. They plan well together to ensure all areas of learning are covered and have created an interesting and pleasant environment for children to learn in. The school is well placed to continue to make further and more rapid improvements.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided a wide range of effective specialist support. This has included advice, training and monitoring from English and mathematics inspectors. Early years advisory staff have contributed to the improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Additional governors have been recruited and training for the governing body as a whole has been put in place. Regular monitoring of the school performance and progress is carried out through visits and reports to senior officers and council members. In addition, the local authority has put the school in touch with a local outstanding school to provide additional advice and guidance which has been well received by senior staff and teachers.