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30 November 2012

Shirley Stapleton  
Headteacher  
The Ashbeach Primary School  
Ashbeach Drove  
Ramsey St Mary's  
Huntingdon  
PE26 2TG

Dear Mrs Stapleton

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Ashbeach Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 28–29 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 June 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 not making enough 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 Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise attainment and ensure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6 by:
  - improving pupils' skills in constructing sentences, punctuation and spelling and increasing opportunities for reading and writing at length, including when pupils use the outdoor learning facilities as a stimulus for writing
  - developing and consolidating basic calculation skills and their application to solving mathematical problems
  - ensuring that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are set challenging tasks that enable them to make faster progress
  - developing a whole school approach to teaching handwriting and correct letter formation in order to improve the neatness and legibility of pupils' work
  - ensuring that pupils respond to teachers' guidance when their work is marked in order to improve standards.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that none is inadequate and much is good or better by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve, especially the more able
  - planning more opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
  - ensuring pupils have enough time in lessons to complete challenging tasks which take account of their different learning needs.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
  - developing the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders and subject leaders so that they rigorously and effectively evaluate teaching, learning and the curriculum and play an active part in driving forward priorities for improvement
  - involving the governing body in evaluating school improvement and the impact of actions on raising achievement, ensuring that its members challenge and hold leaders to account.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 28–29 November 2012**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, literacy and numeracy leaders, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

### **Context**

The deputy headteacher and another teacher have left the school since the previous inspection. A new deputy headteacher and a new teacher both started in September. The new teacher is in her final term as a newly qualified teacher and was appointed before the previous inspection. Another teacher, already employed at the school, has taken up the role of literacy leader.

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

Rates of progress are not improving quickly enough. Pupils make good progress in Years 1, 5 and 6. However, too many pupils make too little progress in writing and mathematics in Years 2, 3 and 4. Too little is being done to improve the quality of teaching. Pupils catch up in Years 5 and 6, and this resulted in last year's leavers reaching broadly average standards of attainment in English and mathematics. This is an improvement on achievement over the last few years. However, not enough pupils reach higher levels of attainment and writing remains a weakness when compared to reading.

Pupils lack basic number skills and this holds them back in mathematics. Pupils often struggle to recall important number facts like multiples and this slows their ability to solve problems. There are insufficient opportunities to practise and learn number facts so pupils are not getting better at this.

A new handwriting scheme has been purchased and is starting to be used. This is yet to have any real impact on presentation throughout the school. There is evidence of improvement in presentation, spelling and grammar in some classes because of the teachers' high expectations but this remains very inconsistent across different classes. Pupils are being given more opportunities to write for different purposes in different subjects but the quality of these opportunities also varies considerably.

Pupils with special educational needs are being provided with extra sessions and additional support in class. Additional training has been provided for teaching assistants and the special educational needs coordinator is beginning to analyse data to ensure that these pupils are making better progress. The school is confident that

these sessions make a difference to pupils but it is yet to collect convincing evidence to support this view. Teaching assistants are providing focused work with groups of pupils. HMI will consider the impact of this when he next visits. There is work done to help some pupils manage their behaviour better. This therapeutic work takes place out of the class. However, the impact of this is limited because work is not always set at the right level for these pupils when they return to class and they are often distracted by other things happening around them. Too often these additional sessions are not focused on improving educational outcomes, and the calm environment that is central to these interventions is not replicated in classrooms.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality and effectiveness of teaching remain far too variable and not enough has been done to tackle the weak teaching identified at the last inspection. Too many lessons are inadequate and work in pupils' books show that too many continue to make slow progress in mathematics and writing. Progress in reading is better.

Pupils do well in Year 1 and in Years 5 and 6. Teaching in these classes is stronger and pupils make more rapid progress. In these classes, teachers make sure that no time is wasted and pupils often have opportunities to talk about their work and learning. Pupils in these lessons enjoy the activities they are given and they work hard. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond well to these.

In some classes, too much time is wasted on activities that serve little purpose. Pupils do not get enough time to practise basic skills like recalling multiplication facts or counting forwards and backwards. In mathematics, new resources have been introduced and these are having some impact in helping pupils to recognise and compare the size of numbers. However, too many adults are too focused on helping pupils get the right answer rather than helping them to understand the mathematics behind the calculation. This means that some pupils struggle to remember methods and fail to understand why the process they complete produces the correct answer.

In English, some teachers almost always give all pupils the same work to complete in a lesson and this is not suitable for the wide range of abilities within each class. Where this is the case, work in pupils' books is of a poor quality because the work is not challenging enough or it is too difficult.

Marking is improving. The school's marking policy is clear and teachers are following aspects of this. However, too many teachers do not follow this precisely enough and, as a result, its impact is limited. Some teachers' marking is illegible and does not present a good enough role model. Too often, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to respond to their teachers' comments and feedback.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave well in school when motivated and engaged in their activities. The behaviour of some continues to deteriorate when they are not suitably challenged or they do not understand the task they have been given. Some pupils talk about bullying in school, including the use of homophobic and racist language. Pupils say that bullying is dealt with when they tell a teacher, but teachers do not always know when bullying occurs.

In good lessons, pupils' behaviour is very positive and they contribute fully to lessons, working diligently on the tasks they are given.

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

Leaders have been too generous in their evaluations about the quality of teaching. Because of this, they have been slow to tackle the inadequacies identified at the last inspection. Performance management is not used rigorously enough in holding teachers to account for their performance.

Leaders are too distracted from the most important areas of improvement by other peripheral matters. Essential improvements are left unattended because other issues occupy too much of the senior leaders' time.

The deputy headteacher brings a wealth of experience from his previous position within the local authority's information and communication technology (ICT) team. He has used this experience to improve writing in Years 5 and 6 by developing writing opportunities online. He has been frustrated by local network problems that are causing the school's internet connection to be poor. It is important that his skills are focused on improving teaching and holding teachers to account. It is a poor use of his time to be entangled in technical issues around internet access while there are so many more pressing issues on which his time would be better spent.

Literacy and numeracy leaders are beginning to get to grips with their roles. The literacy leader is new to this role and is yet to have any significant impact on improving writing. Work has been done to improve reading opportunities and the school can point to examples of some pupils becoming reengaged by their renewed interest in reading. The action plan to improve literacy is very general and needs to be tightened up to focus on improving the quality and consistency of teaching. The local authority has plans to support this development shortly.

The mathematics subject leader has been in position for a longer period and has worked with local authority advisers to develop an action plan that is focused on improving teaching. This leader has introduced a calculations policy which means that teachers are increasingly teaching the same methods of calculations throughout the school. Improvements in the progress that pupils make would suggest that this

has had some impact, although the quality of teaching seen shows that there is still a considerable way to go in securing teaching in mathematics that is always good enough. Middle leaders continue to rely on the support of the local authority.

The governing body is becoming more organised and is beginning to make use of school data to ask questions of leaders. Governors are beginning to monitor the work of the school and focus on the most pressing issues. They have a better understanding of what is happening in the school and are taking advice from two advisory governors who have recently been allocated to the school by the local authority.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided support through teaching and learning consultants. This has had the most impact in the development of a robust action plan for improving mathematics and in supporting a new teacher in developing the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority conducts termly monitoring meetings where officers review the progress made by the school and identify the next steps needed. The local authority has prepared a statement of action which was deemed fit for purpose prior to this inspection. The local authority stated in this that it did not feel it necessary to provide additional support from other successful schools at this time. The findings of this inspection would suggest that this decision should be reviewed to ensure that leaders at all levels have good models of leadership that they can learn from. The local authority recognises the importance of maintaining a diligent eye on the induction of the newly qualified teacher employed by the school and the need to ensure continuing support for the recently qualified teacher who is also employed by the school.