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17 January 2013

Mrs D Anderson
Meredith Infant School
Porchester Road
Portsmouth
PO2 7JB

Dear Mrs Anderson,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Meredith Infant School

Following my visit with Juliet Ward, additional inspector, to your school on 15–16 January 2013, 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 in 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 – satisfactory

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 Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Develop the school's capacity to improve by ensuring that leaders, including those at the highest level:
 - prioritise and plan realistically to address key weaknesses
 - implement rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluation as a matter of urgency.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 so that by July 2012 none is inadequate and the large majority is good or better, by ensuring that:
 - performance management is improved
 - systems for assessing learning are consistently applied, monitored and evaluated so that staff understand pupils' abilities and provide suitable challenge for all, including more-able pupils
 - pupils learn actively so that their willingness to learn is encouraged.
- Improve the achievement of all pupils, particularly in writing, by:
 - ensuring that sufficient time is allocated to teaching literacy
 - ensuring that more pupils achieve the higher Level 3 by the end of Key Stage 1 in 2012
 - identifying a leader to take responsibility for the curriculum and its planning
 - improving the curriculum so it provides a stimulating and appropriate framework for pupils' learning that meets individual needs.
- Improve attendance and punctuality throughout the school, so that the proportion of pupils who attend is in line with the national average by July.

Special measures: monitoring of Meredith Infant School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 15–16 January 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, teaching staff, teaching assistants, a representative mealtime assistant, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. In addition, informal conversations were held with pupils at break and lunchtimes.

Context

The interim leadership structure of the school under the direction of an executive headteacher will remain until the end of this academic year. Currently, the governing body is in the process of advertising for a substantive headteacher. The intention is to secure this position by the end of January 2013 so that a period of transition throughout the summer term 2013 can take place between the interim executive headteacher and the successful candidate. The substantive deputy headteacher returned to work part time in the last week of the autumn term 2012. An Early Years Foundation Stage leader took up her post in September 2012.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Children in the Reception classes have settled well to learning and provision is good. Most children are making good progress from starting school with skills and abilities that are generally below national expectations. Senior leaders are confident that the information collected on pupils on a regular basis is accurate and provides a true picture of the progress individual pupils and cohorts are making. All teachers are familiar with the school's expectations regarding the monitoring of pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics, and this system has been successfully embedded throughout the school.

The most recent assessment information indicates the majority of pupils in Key Stage 1 are on track to meet their end of year targets in reading and mathematics by the end of the summer term 2013. This should bring their achievements in line with the national average. However, progress in writing, particularly for more-able pupils, is not as strongly embedded at the present time. Leaders have effectively reviewed the curriculum and time allocated to teaching literacy and writing in particular. Consequently, pupils now have regular opportunities to write in a variety of subjects and for a range of purposes. For example, a group of higher-ability pupils in Year 2 showed a growing understanding of how to write a report for a newspaper. In another class, pupils worked with particular enthusiasm in drafting a character description connected to their work on *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

Senior leaders are confident that these regular opportunities to write, along with more focused support for those pupils who require it, will result in more pupils achieving national expectations in writing by the end of the summer term 2013.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:
Improve the achievement of all pupils, particularly in writing – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve with the majority of teaching now being good or better. The headteacher's evaluation of the current quality of teaching throughout the school concurs with what inspectors' found in their lesson observations. Systems for assessing pupils' learning have been adopted by all teachers and pupils' learning is now regularly monitored and evaluated. This approach provides staff with the necessary information they require to better understand pupils' abilities. Consequently, they provide more challenging lessons which capture the interest of the more able as well as most other pupils.

In the best lessons, teachers set a clear learning objective at the start of the lesson and regularly review pupils' learning throughout the lesson. Their secure subject knowledge also allows them to question pupils with the appropriate amount of challenge and adjust the pace of learning so that all pupils make the best possible progress. For example, this was observed in the Reception classes and in a Key Stage 1 phonics lesson where the excellent organisation of focused reading, writing and phonics groups enabled all children and pupils to sound out letters, blend sounds accurately and practise their cursive writing skills to good effect. As a result, the children and pupils remained highly motivated to learn and made very good progress. Another notable feature of these lessons was the very good knowledge and skill exercised by learning support assistants in their close collaboration with teachers and work with small groups of pupils.

Where teaching is not so strong, teachers plan too much content into a lesson with the result that pupils are not given sufficient time to complete tasks or practise their developing skills sufficiently well. This was the case in an upper Key Stage 1 literacy lesson where pupils remained too passive in their learning as the teacher did not involve pupils enough. For example, there were too few short, frequent pupils' discussions. Also, in a mathematics lesson, a lack of resources for pupils hindered their learning and progress. Senior leaders are aware of these issues and are using an effective system to manage the performance of teachers and to provide specific training for staff related to their agreed professional development needs.

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 so that by July 2012 none is inadequate and the large majority is good or better – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils remain happy at school and feel safe and cared for. They demonstrate positive relations with all adults and are polite and welcoming to visitors. In conversations, pupils said they enjoy school and the interesting topics their teachers plan for them. Incidents of bullying are rare. At lunchtimes, in particular, pupils are provided with a wide range of play resources and activities. The relatively limited playground space is well resourced and its use is carefully managed. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning and this is reflected in the significant improvement in attendance seen since the previous monitoring inspection. School leaders and administrators continue to work closely with parents and carers, and have introduced a range of successful strategies to significantly reduce lateness and bring overall attendance figures in line with the national average.

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

- Improve attendance and punctuality throughout the school – good

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The executive headteacher exercises an 'open door policy' within the school and this encourages a culture of collaboration between staff. Consequently, staff report that they feel part of the school improvement process and that morale within the school is now good. The high expectations and clear vision for school improvement communicated by the executive headteacher also ensures the work of the school remains closely focused on the key issues for improvement that were identified at the time of the previous inspection. The close monitoring of teachers' performance by the headteacher means where further improvement in teaching has been identified teachers are made aware of this and no time is lost in providing appropriate support or training.

Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the work of the school and those who spoke with inspectors say they appreciate the support they receive and the close working relationships they enjoy with colleagues. All staff have benefited from well-focused training and support. The curriculum is much improved and takes into account pupils' interests, and skills development and progression, especially for writing.

The governing body has established a close working partnership with the executive headteacher. As a result, governors are more actively involved in evaluating the school's work and deploy their skills and abilities to good effect. Through the regular reports and updates from senior leaders, governors now take a more confident and strategic approach in their leadership role. Currently, the governing body is in the process of appointing a substantive headteacher for April 2013. It is also aware of

the need to review all leadership roles throughout the school during this significant period of change for the school.

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

- Develop the school's capacity to improve – good

External support

The local authority continues to monitor the school's progress and is supporting the school in the appointment process for a substantive headteacher. The school also continues to benefit from external teacher expertise mainly through the executive headteacher's connections with another local school.