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24 January 2013

Abigail Birch  
Executive Headteacher  
Vale View Community School  
Vale View Road  
Dover  
CT17 9NP

Dear Ms Birch

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Vale View Community School**

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 January 2013, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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 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 Kent.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics so that it is at least average by the end of Year 6 by:
  - ensuring that pupils consistently apply phonic skills when reading and writing
  - improving pupils' skills in spelling, sentence writing and punctuation
  - identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics
  - improving their mathematical problem-solving skills.
  
- Urgently eradicate all inadequate teaching and improve the overall quality of teaching to at least good by:
  - more frequent teaching of literacy skills in Key Stage 1, and ensuring time is used more productively in lessons
  - using assessment information effectively to ensure lesson activities are planned so that they always build on what pupils have already learned
  - ensuring that reading books are well matched to pupils' abilities and are meaningful for those learning English as an additional language
  - ensuring that the least able pupils have daily opportunities to read and to be heard reading.
  
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - developing the skills of the senior leaders and working in full partnership with the executive headteacher to lead and improve the school
  - developing the roles of middle leaders so they take a full part in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment and progress
  - developing the skills of the governing body so that the governors hold the school fully to account.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22–23 January 2013**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised documents such as assessment information, monitoring records, and minutes of meetings held by the strategy group of the governing body and local authority monitoring meetings. She met with the senior staff, a representative from the local authority, had a telephone discussion with the Chair of the Governing Body and met with three other governors. The inspector carried out 10 lesson observations and several shorter visits. All teachers were observed.

### **Context**

Since the visit in September, one teacher has left and been replaced.

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

Although attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is still too low, it is rising because the rate of improvement is speeding up. More than 70% of all pupils made rapid progress in the autumn term in reading, writing and mathematics. The improvements are particularly noticeable in the oldest classes and this is important because these are the pupils with most ground to make up. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and Year 6 is strong because there is consistently high quality teaching in these classes. Gaps between the attainment levels of different groups are closing. This is because of improving teaching as a whole and also because intervention and support activities are increasingly well planned and evaluated to make sure they are targeted correctly and effective. As a result, the progress of groups of pupils such as those with special educational needs is as good as, and often better than, that of other pupils.

The work in pupils' books and in lessons confirms this improvement. Pupils are beginning to take more pride in their work: they are completing more and the quality is improving. Because learning objectives and success criteria are discussed with the pupils, they are more aware of what success in learning looks like. Where the quality of marking is good, pupils' responses show that they are able to see how successful they have been and what they can do next to improve. Their improving skills in literacy and mathematics are helping them in all of their work. For example, older pupils demonstrate quick recall of basic mathematics facts such as times tables and this helps them solve problems quickly and accurately. Younger pupils enjoy using their improving understanding of letters and sounds (phonics) to read and write words and sentences. Across the school, pupils are increasingly able to use

their literacy skills in other subjects. This can be seen in topic and homework books and in lessons. For example, during the visit, Year 1 pupils were drawing maps of Goldilocks's journey and some pupils also added words to label the different features. Some pupils new to the school or in the younger Key Stage 2 classes have not had this solid grounding and do not have a confident grasp of phonics to help them read unfamiliar words but additional reading support is beginning to address this problem.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching has improved. During the visit, no inadequate teaching was observed and, although not all teaching is consistently good, there are features of effective teaching in all classes. Senior staff teach consistently well and therefore provide good role models. Across the school, the emerging good practice seen on the previous visit is being built on and embedded. There is a much stronger focus on what the pupils are learning and better use of what pupils know already. As a result, lesson objectives and success criteria are clearer and are beginning to be used routinely with pupils to help them evaluate their own success. An excellent example of this was seen towards the end of a Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils had time to think about, and discuss, what they had achieved so far, in what was a challenging series of problem solving calculations, and then plan their next steps for the following day's lesson. Teachers and assistants are developing useful questioning skills and are more able to build on pupils' responses to tease out and extend learning.

There has been an improvement in planning to develop pupils' basic calculation and reading skills, including regular well-planned guided reading and early reading sessions. Teachers' planning takes into account the different needs and abilities of the pupils so that there is a better match between activities and abilities. In a few lessons, the plans do not always work out quite so well in practice and the match is still not quite right. The quality of teaching and support provided by teaching assistants is much better and this is contributing very positively to the improvement in the overall quality of teaching. Although there is still a tendency for a few adults to intervene too quickly and give too much help, pupils are much less likely to be over-dependent on adults.

Classrooms are well organised, with key vocabulary, information related to current learning topics, pupils' completed targets and good examples of pupils' work on display to support and promote learning. The rich language environments are particularly helpful in supporting pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. The current focus on English and mathematics means that there is less evidence of learning in other subjects.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave well in lessons and feel safe and happy in school. The explicit teaching of important lifeskills such as teamwork, independence, perseverance and taking responsibility are having a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. They are responding well to the greater challenge and opportunities to be independent in lessons. They persevere and stick at activities even when they find them tricky. This is a marked change from the last visit. Although the severe weather affected attendance during this visit, attendance is improving this academic year and is much closer to average.

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

The quality and impact of leadership and management have also improved since the last visit. Governors, senior, phase and subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator have an impressive depth of knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the school. Their strong sense of purpose and rapidly developing team spirit are spreading confidence and motivating staff and pupils so that the school is moving forward and the pace of improvement is increasing. Improvement plans are sharply focused on raising pupils' attainment and increasing the rate of progress. The school has introduced interim targets so that everyone can evaluate success at several points during the year. Swift action is taken when targets are not achieved and, where targets have already been achieved, the school has revised the final target upwards. Individual teachers are involved in evaluating the impact of their work and are increasingly held accountable for making sure that all pupils do as well as possible.

Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly and rigorously. As a result of advanced leadership training, they are currently improving the monitoring so that they have an even better understanding of what is working well and where improvements need to be made. Phase leaders and the literacy leader follow up with practical support and guidance for staff and they model good practice in the classroom. Staff training is carefully planned so that it meets the greatest needs and is followed up so that it leads to improvements in practice.

The governing body keeps a sharp eye on how well the school is progressing. A small strategy group meets fortnightly to examine school information, carefully monitor actions taken and evaluate progress. They are supported in this work because the information provided by school leaders is comprehensive and clear.

## **External support**

The local authority carries out its monitoring and evaluation role rigorously. In addition, specific training is provided in consultation with the school and is targeted where it will have the most impact. For example, recent training in early reading was both well timed and effective. The school shares expertise across its federation, for example by enabling staff such as teaching assistants to observe their peers and working with partner staff to reach agreements on assessments of pupils' work. The school also belongs to a group of local schools and this arrangement produces benefits such as access to large-scale high quality training.