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14 March 2013

Mrs Judith Barratt  
Acting headteacher  
The Grange Primary School  
Avocet Way  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire  
OX16 9YA

Dear Mrs Barratt

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of The Grange School**

Following my visit with Cliff Mainey, additional inspector, to your school on 12–13 March 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 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 Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

James Henry  
**Additional inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise attainment and improve pupils' progress in English and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that pupils are more actively involved in lessons, rather than spending extended periods listening to teachers
  - making sure pupils are provided with more opportunities to practice and apply their basic skills of numeracy and literacy across the curriculum
  - improving the teaching of phonics, so adults model the sounds correctly, insist that pupils do the same, and make sure the pace of activities is brisk and lively
  - improving the use of the outdoor areas to promote the communication, language and mathematical skills of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
  
- Improve teachers' use of assessment to ensure teaching is at least good by:
  - using accurate data on pupils' progress to provide tasks and activities that are specifically tailored to the needs of individual pupils and groups, and which address any gaps in learning
  - checking regularly on pupils' learning during lessons to tackle any misconceptions, and focus on what pupils need to learn rather than on tasks to complete
  - having a consistent approach to marking and feedback
  - setting clear targets to identify the next steps for individuals and groups
  - tracking pupils' progress more frequently and setting ambitious targets for what pupils can achieve each year and by the end of the key stage.
  
- Ensure that the school's leaders at all levels, including the governing body, take concerted action to speed up the pace of improvement by:
  - providing a clear structure of leadership for senior and middle leaders, with clear roles and responsibilities for all
  - devising a sharply focused improvement plan which sets out explicitly what must be achieved and includes clear means of measuring success
  - implementing a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation of teaching that is followed up with high quality support for all staff
  - checking that agreed teaching strategies are implemented in all classrooms
  - holding teachers closely to account for pupils' progress, including that of significant groups
  - ensuring that all safeguarding procedures are overseen, updated and monitored effectively.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 12–13 March 2013**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. They visited 22 lessons or part lessons and observed 10 teachers.

### **Context**

The governing body have appointed a new headteacher who will take up the post on a permanent basis in April 2013. An experienced teacher, appointed as Early Years Foundation Stage leader, has been in post on a permanent basis since January 2013.

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

School assessments, pupils' work and the learning observed in lessons show that attainment is rising. However, attainment in mathematics continues to be lower than in reading and writing by the end of Key Stage 2. Standards are rising because pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are now making better and often accelerated progress overall because of better teaching. The school is beginning to close the gap for pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, particularly in reading and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and reading and writing in Key Stage 2. However, there are areas where progress slows for some groups of pupils, for example girls' progress in mathematics in Year 5 and boys' progress in reading in Year 3. Also, progress in subjects is inconsistent in different key stages. For example, progress in mathematics is not as accelerated as in reading and writing across Key Stage 2, and progress in writing is not as accelerated as in reading and mathematics across Key Stage 1.

Progress is improving because pupils are more consistently involved in lessons. For example, in a Year 5/6 lesson pupils were setting each other open-ended mathematical challenges to find sequences of numbers that added up to another given number. Pupils are now consistently given opportunities to practice their reading and writing skills in other subjects as subjects are being linked together in 'topics' to make learning more meaningful. However, opportunities for pupils to practice their mathematical skills in other subjects are inconsistent across the school.

The system to develop pupils' early reading skills is now embedded, with teachers and teaching assistants using the same approach to ensure consistency in pupils' learning. This is making a significant difference not only to the pace at which all groups of pupils are learning but also to the quality of teaching.

The improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage environment, particularly to the indoor classroom, and the use of the outdoor area means that children's communication, language and mathematical skills are being promoted more effectively. However, an improvement to the outdoor learning environment continues to be an area for development.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving across the school. This is partly due to teachers using accurate assessments recorded on the school's tracking system to check on pupils' progress and plan activities that meet pupils' abilities. Teachers hold regular pupil progress meetings with senior staff and are using data from assessments to identify any pupil or groups of pupils that may be underachieving and plan extra support to help pupils catch up.

There is a more consistent approach to teaching across the school and, as a result, pupils are now making better and often accelerated progress. For example, teachers regularly use questioning to check on pupils' understanding and correct any mistakes. In one Year 2 mathematics lesson pupils were asked to write numbers that were one less or one more than a given number, with the teacher quickly correcting any mistakes that pupils were making. However, there are occasions when teachers deliver lessons where pupils are given too many ideas to grasp and, as a result, explanations at the beginning of lessons become too long and complicated and opportunities to quickly settle all groups of pupils to work are missed.

Pupils' work shows there is a more consistent approach to marking. Marking in writing is more effective than in mathematics because teachers regularly give comments for pupils about how to improve their work and what they need to learn next. While marking in mathematics is done regularly, normally through ticking right or correcting wrong answers, guidance for pupils about how to improve is inconsistent.

The use of targets to involve pupils in their learning is more consistent across the school. Observations in lessons and pupils books show that targets are used regularly to help pupils move on in their learning, and when asked, pupils knew and understood their targets, particularly in writing.

Ambitious targets in reading, writing and mathematics, based on assessments from pupils in Year 2 and 6, have been set for the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. While pupils are on track to raise attainment, school assessments show they need to continue to make accelerated progress if these targets are to be met, particularly in writing in Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils continue to behave well in school and no disruption to lessons was observed that hindered pupils' learning. Pupils say that they enjoy school, especially as they are now more involved in activities in lessons. They continue to be eager to learn and feel safe because bullying is very rare. All groups of pupils get on well together and relationships between staff and pupils are a particular strength of the school, with pupils confident that staff will deal with any problems or difficulties that may arise.

The very large majority of parents who completed a school questionnaire felt that the school ensured pupils behaved well and dealt effectively with any instances of bullying. Attendance continues to be high, with almost all pupils on time for school.

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

The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, supported by the governing body, have continued the drive and determination to address the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in March 2012. They have rigorously focused on improving the quality of teaching and accelerating pupils' progress. As a result, teaching is improving and pupils are now making better and often accelerated progress. However, progress in mathematics, especially across Key Stage 2, slows. This is partly due to the curriculum in mathematics lacking a clear, structured programme to ensure pupils have consistent opportunities to develop their ability to explore mathematical ideas and use their practical mathematical skills in different situations.

Senior leaders and middle leaders have clear roles and responsibilities and these have now become more established in the school. While middle leaders have undertaken monitoring activities such as reviewing pupils' work, not all have undertaken observations of learning in lessons. Consequently, opportunities are missed to provide further guidance for teachers and share ideas in how to improve lessons.

Self-evaluation continues to be accurate, with senior leaders rigorously implementing actions identified in the school improvement plans that focus strongly on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. As a result, a comprehensive programme is now carried out by senior leaders to regularly monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in lessons. Senior leaders check to ensure that the guidance given to teachers in how to improve is put into practice and linked to teachers' performance management targets. Procedures to hold teachers to account, such as pupil progress meetings, are more established, with targets for the achievement of different groups of pupils part of teachers' performance management objectives.

The governing body are more actively involved in the school. Governors have a better understanding of data and, as a result, they are becoming more independent in holding senior leaders to account. They have begun to be more directly involved in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school through joint monitoring activities with staff, such as reviewing the marking of pupils' work. However, other activities to enable governors to check on the work of the school, such as direct visits to classes, have yet to be regularly undertaken.

Safeguarding arrangements continue to be effective, with policies, procedures and training for staff meeting statutory requirements.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to work closely with the school and provide effective support, for example through providing a specialist mathematics teacher to help improve teaching and training for the governing body to enable governors to more effectively fulfil their roles. The impact can be seen in improvements in the quality of teaching and in the governing body becoming more independent in holding senior leaders to account for the performance of the school.