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11 March 2013

Bradley Taylor  
Acting Headteacher  
Chiltern Gate School  
Verney Avenue  
High Wycombe  
Buckinghamshire  
HP12 3NE

Dear Mr Taylor

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Chiltern Gate School**

Following my visit to your school on Friday 8 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 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 December 2012.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. Three lessons were observed jointly with the acting headteacher. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has retired and the deputy headteacher is currently leading the school as acting headteacher. Changes have been made to the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders. Staffing, including at senior leadership level, has been adversely affected by long-term sickness absence.

One class is currently being taught by a teaching assistant. Governors are in the process of recruiting a substantive headteacher to commence in the summer term 2013.

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

Senior leaders are determined to bring about rapid school improvement. The school improvement action plan written after the inspection of December 2012 is precisely targeted on the areas for improvement. The plan is succinct and focuses on increasing pupils' achievement through raising the quality of teaching, and strengthening leadership and its impact on teaching and pupils' progress. Roles and responsibilities, resources and intended outcomes are identified. Time-frames are explicit and ambitious and the roles of the governing body and senior leaders in monitoring and evaluating progress are clear. Despite this, leadership remains fragile as senior and middle leaders are inexperienced in their roles. Subsequently, the acting headteacher is taking on too many key responsibilities.

Informal monitoring of the quality of teaching by key stage leaders is routine. Feedback is provided with strengths and improvements required, identified and exemplified. A range of initiatives including peer observations, coaching and visits to other schools are being used to drive up the quality of teaching. Formal observations and performance management systems are beginning to be carried out with sufficient rigour and frequency to address the weakest teaching. Most recent school monitoring indicates an increase in the proportion of good teaching since the inspection of December 2012. However, numerous weaknesses still remain. Examples of good practice are being identified, highlighted and discussed during staff meetings. As a result, teachers are beginning to gain a clearer view of what constitutes good practice and elements of teaching, such as lesson planning, and use of ongoing assessment are improving throughout the school. The historic lack of data means it is impossible for leaders to hold an accurate view of pupils' achievements over time. New systems to assess and monitor pupils' progress have now been introduced and these show that 82% of pupils have made at least good progress in English this academic year. Discrepancies between the data and information gained from monitoring confirm that senior leaders are right to treat this information with caution. Improving teachers' expertise in accurately assessing pupils' achievements has rightly been prioritised.

Teachers have an increasing understanding of their own accountabilities for raising pupils' achievements. Improved communication, clear expectations, training and performance management targets ensure all teachers know exactly the priorities they are working towards. Individual pupils' special educational needs and disabilities are being addressed with increasing effectiveness.

Governors provide exceptionally strong and effective support to the school. They have been instrumental in identifying weaknesses and in levelling significant challenge to senior staff. The local authority has been slow to identify the serious inadequacies within the school. Recent support, including brokering links with good and outstanding special schools, and the deployment of an advisory headteacher for two days a week, is now effective in strengthening leadership and improving teaching.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**