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25 April 2013

Lucy Carroll
Headteacher
Meredith Infant School
Portchester Road
Portsmouth
PO2 7JB

Dear Mrs Carroll,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Meredith Infant School

Following my visit (with Julie Sackett, Additional Inspector,) to your school on 23–24 April 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 fourth 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 – good

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 fourth monitoring inspection on 23–24 April 2013

Evidence

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

Context

A new, substantive headteacher took up her position at the beginning of the summer term. The governing body is currently exploring the future options for the school that include academy status. A new full-time deputy headteacher's post has been advertised to start in September 2013.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The detailed monitoring of pupils' progress in English and mathematics ensures all staff remain focused on raising pupils' achievement. Higher ability pupils in Year 2 benefit from regular specialised teaching in order to ensure more will achieve the higher Level 3 in writing in the end of Key Stage 1 assessments in May 2013. The curriculum now ensures sufficient time is allocated to teaching literacy and that lessons deliver stimulating and enjoyable learning experiences for all pupils. For example, work in pupils' books seen by inspectors showed how a topic on 'The Titanic' not only captured pupils' imaginations but provided them with a wide range of opportunities to develop their speaking and writing skills.

Systems to monitor the progress and achievements of pupils are fully embedded within the school. They provide senior leaders with a clear understanding of pupils' improving progress which allows them to provide well directed support for individuals and groups. Pupils' progress information is shared regularly with teachers and this enables them to work closely with each other in order to plan lessons and reflect on the impact they are having on pupils' learning.

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

- Improve the achievement of all pupils, particularly in writing – good

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching throughout the school continues to improve and seeks to engage pupils actively in their learning. Most lessons observed were judged to be good with a minority of teaching still requiring improvement. In the best lessons observed teachers' secure subject knowledge led to well-paced learning and good levels of pupil engagement so that pupils made securely good progress. For example, in a phonics lesson for the youngest children adults set clear behaviour expectations, and provided a range of sound and letter learning activities that promoted children's good concentration and engagement. Similarly in a Year 1 literacy lesson no time was wasted by the teacher in moving from a well taught phonics lesson into a stimulating writing activity introduced through a video clip of the headteacher asking pupils to tell her all about the trip they went on the day before to a local wild-life centre. This was the 'hook' into learning that successfully captured pupils' imagination. The learning activity was clearly explained to pupils so they clearly knew what they needed to do and they were further supported by a good range of high-quality resources. The effective deployment of teaching assistants further supported pupils to successfully complete this writing challenge so that by the end of the lesson all pupils had used photographs and key words to construct a plan for writing a recount of their day out.

Where teaching requires improvement teaching is focused too rigidly on delivering the planned activities within the lesson rather than on adapting and responding to the learning needs of pupils as the lesson progresses. For example, in a Key Stage 1 science lesson, pupils were asked to complete too many activities in too short a time for the learning to be meaningful. This meant there was insufficient time, especially towards the end of the lesson, for the teacher to check on the progress pupils had made and so opportunities to reinforce learning or consolidate pupils' understanding were missed.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement

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

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspectors spoke with a group of parents and carers and informally with pupils during breaks and lunch times. The parents who spoke with inspectors said there had been 'huge improvements' to the school in the past year and they were very pleased with the way the school keeps them regularly informed about their children's progress. One parent said she had been 'pleasantly shocked' by how well her child had settled into his Reception class and could not fault the school in any way. Others said they appreciated the parent classes that were now on offer to support their children in literacy and numeracy. Inspectors saw for themselves how behaviour

within and around the school is typically good. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said they felt safe within school and liked their 'topic lessons' in particular.

Senior leaders and managers continue to successfully manage and monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils. Robust systems are in place to address any persistent lateness or absence. A pastoral support assistant has recently been appointed to work closely with the most vulnerable pupils and their families. The impact of this new initiative will be evaluated in due course.

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 school's capacity to improve has strengthened with the successful appointment of a new headteacher who took up her position at the beginning of this summer term. Leaders and managers including the governing body work effectively together with a shared sense of purpose based on an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This information is regularly shared with governors and used to provide sharply focused support and training to teachers and teaching assistants.

The school has emerged from a turbulent time of change, especially regarding staffing, and is now in a stable position to press on to become a good school. The executive headteacher, ably supported by her deputy and the new headteacher, has maintained an appropriate focus on improving the quality of teaching provision throughout the school by introducing rigorous systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Following on from the previous monitoring visit senior leaders devised an action plan to address the weaknesses of teaching in Year 2 that still persist. Individual targets for teachers that help them improve their teaching are now incorporated into the school's performance management system. This has resulted in the gradual improvement seen in pupils' work and particularly in the quality of pupils' writing. Teachers possess a better understanding of pupils' abilities and now provide suitable challenge for all, and especially the more-able pupils.

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

- Develop the school's capacity to improve – good

External support

The expertise of the executive headteacher continues to be very much appreciated by all staff, governors and parents. She has successfully built the capacity of leaders and managers to demonstrate independently the skills necessary for further sustainable improvement. The local authority continues to provide good support and guidance to the school and as a result of the successful appointment of a new headteacher the school is about to enter into a period of planned withdrawal from the external support that was originally brokered by the local authority.