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Ms Sarah Butterworth  
Headteacher  
Newtown Primary School  
Buxton Road  
New Mills  
High Peak  
SK22 3JS

Dear Ms Butterworth

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Newtown Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 5–6 June 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 taken place since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the third 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 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 Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Dorothy Bathgate  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics so that by July 2013 attainment at the end of Year 6 is at least in line with national averages, by:
  - setting ambitious targets for pupils based on prior attainment and robustly monitoring their progress towards these targets
  - improving the quality of teachers' marking so that pupils are clear about what they have done well and that they need to do to improve
  - providing opportunities for pupils to respond to marking and to correct their work
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn independently through their own research using books and information and communication technology (ICT), and to discuss their work and explain their thinking
  - teaching more lessons in which pupils have to think creatively, work in teams and solve problems.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour so that they are consistently good or better by April 2013, by:
  - eliminating inadequate teaching
  - using accurate assessment information to plan lessons that are matched to the learning needs of all pupils
  - planning learning activities that are consistently stimulating and challenging, and inspire pupils to work hard
  - improving teachers' questioning skills so that they are better able to develop pupils' understanding.
  
- Improve the curriculum so that pupils:
  - learn knowledge and skills sequentially and progressively
  - practice their communication and numeracy skills routinely in other subjects
  - benefit from learning activities that routinely enthuse and interest them.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - involving all stakeholders in establishing a clear vision and direction for the school

- ensuring that school improvement targets are firmly focused on improving the quality of teaching
- introducing systemic procedures to monitor the work of the school and to implement actions to address areas of underperformance
- developing the skills of subject leaders so that they are better able to lead and improve the subject for which they are accountable.

## **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 5–6 June 2013**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. She also held telephone conversations with the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit, one member of staff has resigned. This post is currently being covered by a temporary teacher. A new, substantive teacher has been appointed and will take up post in September. Two new governors have been appointed and a new Vice-Chair of the Governing Body has been elected.

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

Since the previous monitoring visit, pupils' learning has continued to improve and, as a result, rates of progress are improving and attainment is rising. The rate of progress made by pupils across the school in English and mathematics has accelerated and, in many year groups, is good. First-hand evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that assessment data is accurate and the proportion of pupils reaching or exceeding the expected levels for their age in Years 1 to 6 is increasing. This improvement reflects an increasing amount of good teaching.

Across the school, an increasing number of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding allocated to support those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils who are in local authority care), as well as those identified with special educational needs, are making good progress. This is because the school is making effective use of a range of intervention strategies which are monitored rigorously to ensure that pupils' needs are being precisely met. Pupils benefit from the good support and encouragement they receive.

Since the last monitoring visit, the quality of learning for children in Early Years Foundation Stage has improved. Children concentrate for sustained periods of time on a range of well-planned activities and they work effectively without direct adult support. As a result, their literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their social skills, are improving more rapidly.

There is an increasing proportion of good marking which is linked to pupils' targets. There are good opportunities for pupils to respond to marking and learn from their mistakes during 'fix it' time, as well as to evaluate their own and other pupils' work.

Pupils are becoming enthusiastic learners who are keen to learn new skills. They particularly enjoy activities where they can make decisions and share ideas with each other. As a result, they are becoming confident, independent learners.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve and is enabling pupils to catch up on previous gaps in their learning. There is no inadequate teaching and little that requires improvement. There are many consistently positive features of teaching and, as a result, most pupils are making good progress. This is reflected in the school's own monitoring and that of the most recent local authority review.

During this visit, there was good or better teaching in the large majority of lessons seen. Lesson planning is consistent across the school and gives appropriate attention to setting tasks for pupils of different abilities. In the best lessons observed, expectations were high and communicated clearly to pupils so that they knew exactly what they needed to do to improve. These features impacted strongly on pupils' attitudes and achievement. Throughout the school, pupils are developing higher expectations of themselves and of what they can achieve and are rising to them.

Teaching is increasingly based on accurate and regular assessments which are constantly monitored so that, should progress be seen to be slow, plans can be modified and additional support put in place immediately. Pupil progress review meetings provide good opportunities for staff to check assessment data and identify which pupils need more intervention and support.

The role of teaching assistants is developing well. For example, they support pupils with increased confidence and frequently use their initiative well to judge when, and how, to support individuals or groups of pupils.

The recently revised topic-based curriculum is interesting and relevant to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils display keen interest, enjoy good opportunities to apply literacy and numeracy skills, and demonstrate good understanding of key concepts. In addition, there is evidence of a positive impact on developing pupils' moral awareness through their exploration of topics such as poverty and injustice

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The pupils' behaviour was a positive feature of this inspection. Pupils are polite, welcoming and proud of their school. Their behaviour is consistently good in lessons and around the school. Pupils continue to report that they feel safe in school. They enjoy good friendships with no fear of intimidating behaviour.

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

The headteacher is successfully transforming the school into a positive and stimulating learning environment. There is a shared confidence by all those working at the school that Newtown has turned a corner and is now on a secure road to recovery. Robust procedures are now in place in which everyone plays a part for checking on the effectiveness of all aspects of the school's work. All staff are being held accountable for their part in improving outcomes for pupils. The systems for tracking pupils' progress involve individual, group and whole-school tracking and ensure that any underachievement is swiftly identified and immediate action taken to remedy it. These are increasing rates of pupil progress and narrowing the attainment gap with pupils nationally.

Leadership is being successfully devolved as staff build their skills in monitoring and evaluating. For example, subject leaders are involved in carrying out checks on planning and pupils' work, and regularly lead staff training. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have developed a much clearer understanding about their role in school improvement and in holding teachers to account for their work. This is a contributory factor to pupils' improving progress and raised attainment.

The governing body is growing in strength. Governors are making regular, formal visits to school to focus on the priorities for improvement so that they can hold leaders to account for standards and quality. Safeguarding documents were checked during the monitoring visit and continue to meet requirements. Most parents and carers are pleased with the school and believe their child is safe, happy and making good progress.

### **External support**

The good support the school has received from the local authority has been a significant contributory factor in enabling the school to accelerate the rate of improvement. Senior leaders are now beginning to demonstrate that they are capable of driving school improvements and, consequently, are becoming less reliant on the local authority's advice, guidance and support.