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Ms Jill Bennett  
Headteacher  
Priory Primary School  
Limes Road  
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Dudley  
DY1 4AQ

Dear Ms Bennett

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

Following my visit with Glen Goddard, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25–26 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 been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 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 following discussion with me.

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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Dudley.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve teaching and accelerate the progress made by all pupils in order to raise attainment in all year groups by:
  - ensuring that there is a systematic approach to teaching skills in reading, writing and mathematics, and by providing regular opportunities for pupils to use and apply these skills across the curriculum
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and ensuring that lesson activities are engaging and well-matched to the needs of pupils
  - ensuring that marking tells pupils what they need to do to improve and that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to respond to the advice given
  - using support staff effectively to help pupils learn.
  
- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by:
  - ensuring that information about pupils' disabilities and special educational needs is reviewed and shared appropriately so that their needs are planned for and met
  - improving attendance
  - ensuring that actions taken to improve the conduct of pupils who frequently misbehave are sufficiently rigorous to significantly reduce instances of poor behaviour
  - providing a range of play equipment and constructive activities at breaks and lunchtimes
  - promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by giving them more opportunities to enjoy, explore and learn about different cultures and the arts.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in order to secure rapid improvement by:
  - putting into place, with immediate effect, suitable arrangements to ensure that all staff use the correct procedures to prioritise and record cases where safeguarding concerns are identified
  - sharpening the monitoring and evaluation skills of all leaders and managers
  - ensuring that the governing body holds leaders to account.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Priory Primary School**

### **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 25–26 June 2013**

#### **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, including those leaders due to start in September 2013, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, a representative from the local authority, members of staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors conducted joint lesson observations with the three new assistant headteachers, who will take up their posts in September 2013.

#### **Context**

As well as the leadership team expanding with new assistant headteachers there have also been some changes of teaching staff, and a number of new teachers have been appointed for September 2013.

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

The school's forecasts for Year 6 test results in English and mathematics in 2013 indicate that standards remain low compared to national averages. However, they reflect a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the expected levels compared to previous years, when standards were exceptionally low. Despite the variable quality of teaching in Key Stage 2, pupils have made rapid progress in Year 6 because of good support from senior leaders and additional adults. The percentages of pupils exceeding expected levels in writing and mathematics remain very low, but over a quarter of the Year 6 pupils have achieved a high level in reading. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have not made enough progress over time, particularly in classes disrupted by staffing changes and previously weak teaching.

Achievement in lessons is dependent on the quality of teaching. Pupils made good progress in their learning in almost all lessons seen during the visit in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Pupils applied their reading and numeracy skills to decode new words and to solve problems. In Key Stage 2, progress was hampered in too many lessons by the slow pace of activities which left pupils with not enough time to complete tasks. However, there is some good practice and in a numeracy lesson all groups of pupils made good progress in solving a problem to do with predicting the number of possible handshakes between a set number of people.

#### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection visit, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. In these lessons activities are

planned well to take account of pupils' different starting points. Pupils have more opportunities for extended writing and to make choices about their learning. Reading skills are taught systematically. The current topic of knights and castles, linked to a recent visit to Kenilworth Castle, has enthused pupils to write about their experiences on the trip. Behaviour is managed well and there are hardly any incidents of disruption. Where teaching is good, additional adults are used effectively to ask pupils questions and record their responses. In the best examples of marking and feedback, teachers set pupils questions and additional tasks to complete, which they then mark with helpful comments.

Elsewhere, mostly in Key Stage 2, teaching requires improvement or at times is inadequate. Pupils spend too long on introductory tasks and do not have enough time to show what they have learnt. During classwork, pupils do not always have the independent learning skills to know what to do next if they get stuck or finish their work early. Too often, additional adults are rooted to one spot and do not pick up pupils' misconceptions elsewhere quickly enough. Although teachers comply with the school's marking policy, their feedback does not consistently give pupils a clear enough idea of what they need to do next to improve their work.

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

Pupils are enthusiastic in their learning, even in lessons where the pace dips. They rarely misbehave in lessons or around the school. There has been a significant fall in the number of 'red card' warnings issued, and also in the severity of the incidents recorded. Pupils report that while some incidents do still occur they are no longer serious enough to disrupt their learning. They are highly positive about rewards, which they see as genuinely recognising good behaviour. Relationships between different groups of pupils, and between adults and pupils, are nearly always good.

Pupils have more opportunities to take on more responsibilities, for example through the school council and they are now confident that they could now lead this themselves. Attendance continues to improve slowly. Although it is still below the national average, the gap has narrowed for the third successive year. The number of pupils identified as persistent absentees has fallen throughout the year, as measures to tackle absence have taken effect. The school meets all its statutory safeguarding responsibilities for keeping pupils safe.

The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through subject teaching is at an early stage of development, particularly in terms of cultural and spiritual diversity. However, the topic of knights and castles has fully engaged pupils in their learning.

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

All members of the school community – staff, governors, parents and pupils – have been influenced by the headteacher's infectious passion and vision to raise standards. The appointment of three additional assistant headteachers from September 2013 gives the school further potential capacity to improve. All senior leaders, including those newly appointed, demonstrate the ability to judge the quality of teaching accurately and identify the right areas for improvement.

The school's action plan clearly sets out steps for improvement and how they will be measured. The school is now rich in data on pupils' achievement, so leaders can analyse trends in performance and quickly identify underachievement. Pupil progress meetings are currently held with staff each term, and the increasing capacity of the senior leadership team means that they can be more frequent in the future.

The rigorous monitoring of teaching by current senior leaders has led to a large turnover of staff, with a number of teaching appointments made for September. In the short term this has led to disruption of staffing in some year groups, with an adverse effect on pupils' achievement. Senior leaders have sought to minimise this disruption by providing good additional support, mainly for Year 6 pupils, which has led to rapid achievement. The work of teaching assistants is not monitored with the same rigour as that of teachers.

Information on the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is now being brought into line with progress data on other pupils in the school. The 'irresistible curriculum' developed for the summer term has successfully enthused pupils in their writing, and the school is planning to expand this further in the autumn term. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are developing their role well to both support and challenge senior leaders. They are taking effective steps to make sure that improvements can be sustained within the budget.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to provide effective support to the school through leadership appointments and the development of the Interim Executive Board. As the school strengthens its leadership capacity, it is becoming less dependent on the local authority for support.