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6 December 2013

Mrs Debora Marshall  
Acting Executive Headteacher  
Elson Infant School  
Elson Lane  
Gosport  
PO12 4EU

Dear Mrs Marshall

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Elson Infant School**

Following my visit with David Shears, Additional Inspector, to your school on Thursday 5 December 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 May 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.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers (NQT) before the next monitoring inspection. There should be no more than one NQT in each year group.

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 Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

John Seal  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Significantly improve the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that at least the majority of children reach a good level of development by:
  - ensuring there is effective leadership and management for all staff working in Reception
  - identifying correctly the additional needs of vulnerable pupils and those at risk of underachieving early on in Reception
  - producing an action plan which communicates high expectations for all staff and children and includes challenging targets
  - ensuring that lesson planning specifies the intended learning outcomes, including key vocabulary, for all the required areas of learning
  - ensuring that all staff help children to focus on their learning
  - encourage children to practise the skills they have learnt in the activities they choose for themselves.
- Raise the achievement of all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for boys, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, so that all make expected progress and reach at least the levels expected for their age by:
  - ensuring there is rigorous and systematic daily teaching of letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) for all pupils and that pupils are encouraged to use and apply their phonic skills when reading and writing across the curriculum
  - increasing pupils' subject specific vocabulary in mathematics
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills.
- Ensure that a substantial and increasing proportion of teaching is good or better by:
  - making sure teachers take responsibility for meeting the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and for this to be reflected in their planning
  - structuring lessons in a way that enables all pupils to work independently
  - ensuring there is a good pace of learning by increasing the level of challenge for the more able pupils so that their knowledge, skills and understanding progress well
  - providing regular opportunities for pupils to discuss and share ideas before they start writing
  - embedding the use of assessment strategies during lessons so that teachers check more regularly and accurately the learning and progress being made by different groups of pupils.
- Ensuring that leaders, managers and the governing body become effective in driving and embedding improvements throughout the school, by:
  - developing the role of governors so that they hold the school to account for the progress made by different groups of learners and contribute more effectively to the strategic direction of the school

- developing the role of middle managers so that they are proactive in leading their areas of responsibility in line with the school's priorities
- improving the quality of action plans so that they all specify how initiatives will impact on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils
- ensuring that all action plans include success criteria that are measurable, so that progress can be checked at regular intervals
- making sure that self-evaluation is rooted in evidence about the impact that actions are having on the development, learning and progress of different groups of pupils.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 5 December 2013**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher of the partnership school has been appointed to the role of acting executive headteacher of both schools until August 2015. The deputy headteacher is acting head of school. Five teachers have been appointed to replace staff who left at the end of the summer term. Two of them are newly qualified teachers (NQTs). An inclusion manager has been appointed from within the current staff and, as a temporary measure, the executive headteacher is leading the Early Years Foundation Stage. The senior leadership team also includes a Key Stage 1 leader who continues to lead and manage mathematics.

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

The unvalidated assessment results for 2013 indicate that the proportion of pupils attaining nationally expected levels at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics significantly increased in 2013. As a result, for the first time in over four years, most pupils' achievement was at least in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was lower than average in mathematics. Boys' attainment is in line with that seen nationally, but in reading and writing the gap between boys and girls is wider than that seen nationally.

Work seen by inspectors, in books and during lessons, indicates that standards achieved by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics continue to be in line with the national average, with rates in progress beginning to increase.

Children's levels of development in Reception are slightly below that seen nationally for children of their age. Most of them are making reasonable progress. Different groups of learners, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the most able, are making reasonable progress.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is inconsistent. Not all teachers target underachievement with enough urgency. As a result, although most pupils are making reasonable progress in reading, writing and mathematics, they could be making even more. Established teachers deliver good lessons, but those who have recently joined are still developing the skills and understanding to help pupils make consistently good or better progress. Where teaching is good, pupils are given work that challenges them. Marking of pupils' work is consistently helpful in giving pupils information in how to improve further. Teachers use questions well to make pupils think about problems. This was seen to good effect in a Year 2 mathematics lesson. Assessment

information is used accurately to provide pupils with work that matches their abilities and needs. Staff are aware of the need to reduce the gap in attainment between boys and girls. A range of activities in the better lessons supports an improvement in boys' achievement.

In the classes where teaching requires improvement, including some in the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers do not use their assessment of pupils' work precisely enough. This leads to some pupils being unclear in their understanding about what they need to do to improve. Other pupils, particularly the most able, find the work too easy. In Reception, activities are generally well planned, but feedback and intervention from adults are not consistently frequent enough to support children in making as much progress as they could. Teachers accurately assess pupils' development in the different areas of learning. However, this is not consistently used or updated to analyse the overall progress children make over time. Better use is being made of the outdoor learning areas and sound plans are in place to continue this work.

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

Attendance is above average and there is very little recorded poor behaviour. Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy their lessons. Relationships are positive. On a very few occasions, inspectors observed an exceptionally small number of pupils disrupting learning because of a lack of support in the teaching.

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

Senior leaders and managers have ensured that staff have a common understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school. Plans for improvement identify the priorities from the inspection report in May 2012. Actions to tackle the remaining weaknesses can be clearly seen.

Senior leaders are committed to improving the quality of teaching through a range of informal and formal strategies. These are valued by the staff and are closely linked to their appraisal targets. However, formal monitoring and feedback are not robust enough to enable leaders, governors and staff to gauge how quickly the quality of teaching is improving, especially in English and mathematics. Middle managers regularly analyse information about pupils' progress and look critically at work and lesson planning. Sound plans are in place for the inclusion coordinator to begin observations in the spring term.

Governors are keen to support the school and make regular visits to ensure they are up to date with developments. The level of challenge from the governing body to senior leaders is developing but requires further work with regard to checking how quickly teaching is improving.

### **External support**

The link with the partnership school has developed well since the last monitoring visit. NQTs are well supported by a mentor and there is a growing collaborative

approach to improving middle leaders' skills, including the joint moderation of pupils' work.

In addition, the local authority continues to provide specialist support including English, mathematics and Early Years Foundation Stage advice. As the school becomes more self-sufficient this support is being phased out. The school's overall progress is regularly checked by the Leadership and Learning Partner who visits every six weeks.