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11 June 2014

Mrs Stephanie Praetig and Mrs Lynda Evans  
Executive Headteacher and Consultant Headteacher  
Niton Primary School  
Niton  
Ventnor  
Isle of Wight  
PO38 2BP

Dear Stephanie Praetig and Lynda Evans

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

Following my visit with Elisabeth Linley, Additional inspector, to your school on 9–10 July 2014, 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 2013. 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 not appoint newly qualified teachers.

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 Isle of Wight and Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Susan Gadd  
**Additional Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2013**

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' achievement, by ensuring that teachers raise achievement through rigorous systematic approaches by:
  - having consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in Years 3 and 4, and providing them with work that will challenge them to make rapid progress
  - using assessment information accurately to check if pupils are on track to meet their targets and to set work that allows them to catch up if they have fallen behind
  - creating opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in a wider range of subjects.
- Improve the leadership of teaching, by:
  - developing systems to regularly and rigorously check its quality
  - ensuring teachers are held to account for pupils' progress
  - ensuring teachers are provided with the training they need to teach effectively consistently.
- Develop the skills of leaders and managers at all levels, by ensuring they:
  - are given any necessary training to take a full share of leadership responsibilities
  - evaluate school performance more accurately
  - produce a sharper improvement plan, with time-limited, measurable steps to success that are clearly linked to intended outcomes for pupils and which are regularly checked
  - collect and analyse data about pupils' progress sufficiently frequently and effectively, and take action where needed to make sure individuals and groups are not falling behind.
- Improve the planning of the subjects and topics taught, especially in mathematics, so it includes precise details about the areas of study that need to be taught, and gives pupils more opportunities to develop independent and creative methods of learning.
- Ensure that the governing body holds leaders robustly to account for the school's performance.
- Commission an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9–10 July 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including the checks made to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children.

Inspectors met with senior leaders, teaching staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, Vice Chair of the governing body, one additional Governor, and groups of pupils.

Inspectors spoke informally to a group of parents and carers. Nine part-lessons were observed; all of these were conducted jointly alongside the executive headteacher or the consultant headteacher.

### **Context**

Since the last visit a consultant headteacher has been appointed temporarily for two days a week to replace the outgoing associate headteacher. Two class teachers have left the school and been replaced by temporary teachers: one full-time teacher and two part-time teachers. The school no longer has a substantive headteacher in post.

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

In Reception, children continue to make rapid progress from their starting points, such that 77% have achieved a good level of development this year. This represents a significant improvement compared to previous years. Much of this progress is as a result of focused teaching, clear identification of children's needs and strong adult interaction with children to extend their learning.

At the end of Year 2 the unvalidated Key Stage 1 data indicate that attainment remains broadly average although this is within a declining trend. This is especially the case for the more able pupils and in writing. However the work in pupils' books and the school's own data indicate that growing numbers of pupils have made accelerated progress since September. This is particularly the case in reading and mathematics. These improvements are also mirrored in the work seen in Year 1 and the school's own data.

In Key Stage 2, pupils are beginning to catch up from past underachievement especially in reading and mathematics. Progress during this academic year has accelerated for many pupils. This is due to focused staff training and greater opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in a range of contexts. However leaders have identified that progress in writing is still an area of significant concern, along with the progress of some pupils from particular groups. These groups include boys, those with special educational needs and the more able pupils. Attainment in writing

at the end of Year 5 is of particular concern given pupils' starting points. Leaders are now planning how best to ensure that all pupils have a range of opportunities to practise their writing skills in different contexts while maintaining high levels of presentation within their written work.

The unvalidated end of Year 6 tests indicate that attainment in mathematics and reading has generally increased but has declined in writing. The strong subject knowledge of the class teacher and pupils' thirst for learning have resulted in growing numbers of pupils making significant progress since September. However, it has not been enough for some pupils to make up for past underachievement.

The local authority has successfully worked alongside leaders and teachers to ensure that on the whole the school now has an accurate baseline from which they can measure progress. Further work is planned for September to maintain this accuracy.

### **The quality of teaching**

Despite staff training and monitoring by school leaders the progress in this area since my last visit has been variable; this is partly due to staff changes and partly due to staff not yet having a strong enough understanding of pupils' needs. During this visit the learning observed ranged from inadequate to good, with some improvement since the last visit.

In the majority of lessons pupils had very positive attitudes towards their learning and displayed a real desire to complete the tasks they were set. They were keen to support each other and had a growing understanding of how they could work in groups to discuss their thoughts and ideas. In some lessons teachers demonstrated their ability to use a range of questions and ensured that teaching assistants were used more efficiently to support pupils in developing new concepts and skills. This was evident in one lesson, for example, when pupils were solving money problems. In other lessons pupils were able to demonstrate their confidence in solving mathematical problems such as when they used their understanding of fractions to complete a Roman Column in Years 3 and 4. However this strong practice is not consistent across the school or different lessons.

Leaders recognise that teaching requires further improvement. In particular more account needs to be taken of pupils' specific needs, especially for those that are more able or have special educational needs. Improvements in this area will help ensure that learning is not hindered by work that is either too easy or too difficult.

The greatest improvements observed during this visit were seen in Reception. The use of the outdoor environment has improved significantly. A range of resources are available. Adults are focused on developing children's skills and experiences in different areas of learning. For example, in one lesson children were learning about different ways of creating sums to 10 and 20 by using a range of practical resources

before writing down the sums they had created. Careful adult questioning enabled children to explore the numbers they were using while building their confidence in addition.

Evidence in pupils' books in Key Stages 1 and 2 revealed that marking is more consistent in literacy and pupils have greater opportunities to assess their own learning as well as to respond to adults' comments. However this strong practice is not as consistent in mathematics or across other subjects.

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

Pupils' behaviour in and around school is positive. Pupils were observed to be thoughtful and caring of one another in lessons and they worked together well in pairs and in groups. This was evident from the youngest children upwards. For example, in Reception, a child struggling to spell the word 'book' was supported very well by his friend who suggested that he look at how he had sounded out and spelt the word 'as this might help'.

The school has recently introduced a system for class teachers to log any concerns about pupils' behaviour. Leaders and managers have yet to ensure that there are clearly understood criteria for completing these logs. Similarly, the logs have not been formally reviewed so that leaders can be assured all issues have been resolved appropriately and to see if there is any potential impact upon the curriculum. For example, awareness of different types of bullying might be required.

Pupils were observed playing well together at lunchtime. However, in discussion with pupils in Key Stage 2 they said that bullying had sometimes occurred at playtimes. The pupils provided some examples and said that issues had not always been resolved well enough and they felt that too often 'keeping apart' from someone was the solution. Pupils talked with awareness of cyber bullying and felt that a recent talk provided in school had been helpful.

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

Since the last monitoring visit the executive and consultant headteachers have focused on developing leadership at various levels and developing a more consistent approach to how adults identify what pupils have achieved. Good support from the local authority has meant there is greater confidence in the current data held by the school and leadership at various levels is beginning to develop. As a result of their greater involvement in pupil progress meetings the literacy and numeracy consultants are now more aware of the data across the school and are beginning to identify underachieving groups. This has provided leaders with the foundations they need to help them have a better understanding of the challenges they face. Changes are being considered to the pupil progress documents to support teachers in

identifying what children need to know next to help accelerate progress. Leaders recognise they now need to develop a systematic cycle of monitoring where they are able to evaluate the impact they are having on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

The leadership of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SENCO) is at the early stages of its development. From September there will be a new SENCO and this appointee is working together with the current SENCO to aid this transition. The leaders have particularly valued the support provided by the local authority to ensure that provision for these pupils is effective. Currently a range of interventions is in place, but a full analysis of their impact on pupils' achievement has not been completed. It is recognised, however, that the interventions used must be those that best meet the pupils' needs and to this end the SENCO is exploring with the staff what other interventions might be considered for future use. The local authority is aware that greater support is needed in this area before the next monitoring visit.

Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is strong. The leader has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development. Good support from the local authority has ensured that significant changes have been made to the outside area, there is a good understanding of how children are progressing and teaching is good. Plans are now being considered to ensure that this leader is able to fulfil her responsibility to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1.

Governors continue to develop in confidence in their role to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Their increased involvement with the staff was noted positively by senior leaders. Governors have taken on link roles with staff and they value the headteacher's reports and assessment data which are now presented to them in a way that can be interpreted effectively. As a result, they have a much better picture of what the school does well and where concerns remain. The governors have benefited from training, for example, in induction for new governors, e-safety, safeguarding and safer recruitment. Governors are utilising their professional skills as seen in the support provided to review provision for information and communication technology both in terms of the school's infrastructure and the curriculum, which currently is very weak. Performance management is an area of the school's work that is not yet fully in place and requires immediate attention as planned. Governors must also ensure that policies, risk assessments and staff checks are reviewed in a timely manner.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide good support. The greatest impact is seen in the growing confidence of some leaders, the significant changes made to Reception and leaders' growing understanding of school data.

Before the next visit the local authority intends to continue the support for the literacy, numeracy and special educational needs leaders, particularly in helping them to evaluate the impact of their work. Further support is also being planned to help improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The overall leadership of the school will be different in September. However these future plans have yet to be confirmed. The school will continue to require strong leadership and continued support if it is to accelerate the pace of change to an appropriate point by the next monitoring visit.