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17 October 2014

Mrs Teresa Cross  
The Acting Headteacher  
St White's Primary School  
St White's Road  
Cinderford  
GL14 3DH

Dear Mrs Cross

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of St White's Primary School**

Following my visit with Lesley Voaden, Additional Inspector, and Paul Jones, Associate Inspector, to your school on 15 and 16 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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 appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. This permission relates to newly qualified teachers being appointed to work in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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 Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely  
Ken Buxton

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring:
  - teachers use the information they hold on pupils to plan learning activities that are not too easy or too difficult for the different groups in their classes, especially the more able and those with special educational needs
  - teachers raise their expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve, especially the more able
  - pupils are provided with clear guidance on what they are expected to know, understand and be able to do in a single lesson or series of lessons
  - teachers mark work so that pupils know what and how to improve and have opportunities to respond to marking quickly.
- Ensure that all groups of pupils consistently make good progress and attain more highly in English and mathematics across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 by:
  - improving pupils' basic skills in mathematics by giving them more chances to apply those skills and to use them in other subjects
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to write in different styles in other subject areas to develop and widen their skills in writing
  - ensuring that the progress made by pupils eligible for free school meals, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is faster and any gaps in their skills and understanding are closed more quickly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - ensuring that school leaders at all levels use the information they hold on how well different groups of pupils are doing to compare their progress and intervene where appropriate
  - producing school development plans that identify clearly and specifically how improvements are to be achieved, who is going to monitor the actions and how the impact of the actions is to be assessed
  - developing middle leaders further so that they can effectively review the quality of teaching and learning and use their skills to coach other teachers by modelling good and outstanding teaching
  - ensuring the governing body holds the school rigorously to account by monitoring the impact of actions aimed at raising the achievement of different groups of pupils such as those eligible for pupil premium funding.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved further. In addition, an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance should be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 15 and 16 October 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised relevant documents. Inspectors held meetings with the acting headteacher and other members of staff. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors and two representatives from the local authority. In addition, the lead inspector spoke on the telephone with two other local authority representatives and the headteacher of a neighbouring primary school who is providing external support.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, the substantive headteacher has been ill and is currently absent from school. The deputy headteacher is leading the school as the acting headteacher. Two members of staff are currently on maternity leave and a third teacher begins her maternity leave in November. In September 2014, two governors resigned and the governing body was reconstituted. Two new governors have already been seconded to the governing body. Applications are being considered as the governing body works to appoint new governors. Building work on the new school is due to begin before the end of the calendar year.

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

Progress to improve pupils' achievement got off to a slow start after the inspection in December 2013. However, since the recent monitoring inspection in June 2014, the school's leaders have risen to the challenge and are now taking firm action to increase the pace of pupils' learning.

Evidence arising from lesson observations shows that the school's efforts to improve the quality of teaching are beginning to show some improvement. Teachers' expectations of pupils are increasing in relation to the quantity and quality of work that pupils produce. In lessons, teachers take care to explain the purpose of the activities planned. As a result, pupils are increasingly confident about what they are being asked to do, which is improving their independence and self-esteem.

Teachers are increasingly focused on enabling pupils to make faster progress than previously was the case. Evidence in books indicates that most pupils are making the expected rates of progress. However, as yet, pupils are not accelerating their rate of learning, which would enable them to attain higher standards. Similarly, the performance of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs has not yet shown the improvements needed.

The most recent end of key stage assessments indicate some improvement in reading standards across the school, but a declining picture for writing. The 2014 Key Stages 1 and 2 mathematics results have remained broadly the same as those

achieved in 2013. Although there is an improvement in reading standards, the school anticipates that its 2014 results will be below the government's floor targets.

### **The quality of teaching**

There is a strong desire across the school to strengthen and improve the quality of teaching. Staff are increasingly working together to discuss different ways of teaching to identify the most successful strategies. Some teachers, who work in parallel classes with similar age pupils, are working well together to plan their teaching activities. This strategy ensures that the pupils in both classes experience a similar learning experience and that the teachers can work together to discuss how much progress their pupils are making.

Evidence gathered from lesson observations indicates that teachers are having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. Lessons often engage pupils well as the activities planned interest them. As yet, most teachers are not planning well enough for pupils' full range of abilities. This means that, although the activities planned are often pitched to challenge most pupils, for some the work is too difficult and for others it is not demanding enough. Consequently, some pupils finish work quickly, without being stretched, and others get stuck and make mistakes. This results in these pupils not making the progress that they should.

The recently introduced marking policy has helped to ensure greater consistency of feedback to pupils. Teachers' comments are often written neatly and provide a good role model for pupils as an example of good quality writing. Increasingly, pupils are responding to teachers' marking and using the feedback to improve the quality of their work.

The school lacks confidence in some of its internal tracking data, which it has been using to monitor pupils' progress. As a result, in some year groups, teachers are not fully confident about the prior performance of individual pupils that they are teaching. The school's leaders are fully aware of this situation and are taking urgent steps to rectify this issue.

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

Pupils' attitudes to learning are often positive and pupils apply themselves diligently in lessons. They work together well and share ideas when asked to contribute to discussions. Pupils are responsive to teachers' instructions and any incidents of off-task behaviour are dealt with and managed sensitively. However, this positive behaviour in class is not always resulting in pupils making good progress. This is because the activities they are asked to do are not sufficiently challenging for all ability groups.

Pupils behave well around the school. They play sensibly at breaktimes and follow school routines well when having lunch in the canteen. Staff at the school talk positively about pupils' good behaviour. Pupils are knowledgeable about the school's

expectations of behaviour and say that they enjoy being at school and feel safe. The school has recently introduced systems to track and monitor incidents of pupils' inappropriate behaviour.

The loss of the school's crossing patrol, used to monitor the road between the two sites, has caused concern to both parents and staff. The school has responded by organising road safety training for pupils and, importantly, staff take great care to ensure the safety of pupils when they are crossing between sites.

The school's strategies to improve pupils' attendance are proving to be successful. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved and the school is now working to reduce the number of incidents of pupils arriving late for school.

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

Since the previous monitoring inspection the atmosphere within the school has been transformed. There is now a strongly focused approach to improving the quality and impact of the school's work. Although only in post since the end of June 2014, the acting headteacher has galvanised the school into action. The new Chair of the Governing Body is also making a significant contribution, adding to and strengthening the quality and effectiveness of the school's leadership.

The acting headteacher is providing strong leadership and she is being supported well by her colleagues and the school's governing body. Working together, there is a strong determination to bring about the improvements needed. The school is receiving timely and appropriate support from other professionals as the school's leaders develop their capacity to lead and manage the school successfully.

Working with the local authority, the acting headteacher has an accurate knowledge of the school's work and a clear picture about where improvement is needed. The school's improvement plan is focused on appropriate priorities. The acting headteacher and the governing body are monitoring the impact of each initiative on a regular basis.

The acting headteacher is providing regular reports to the governors, which are increasingly detailed and informative. As a result, the governors have confidence that the school's leadership is demonstrating important leadership skills and rising to the challenge of improving the school's work.

The senior leaders are monitoring the quality of teaching and holding teachers to account for their performance in the classroom. To ensure that teachers focus on increasing the rate of pupils' learning, the school's leaders are using performance management procedures appropriately. As the school's tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress is refined, the school's leaders are introducing and setting appropriately challenging targets that relate to pupils' academic performance.

Teachers with leadership responsibilities are beginning to contribute to the school's improvement initiatives. Their engagement is helping to ensure that the school policies are being implemented with greater consistency across the school. As yet, the school's work has not had the desired impact of accelerating pupils' progress. This is because the recently introduced initiatives have not had sufficient time to be embedded across the school.

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

Since the review of governance was completed, the governing body has been reconstituted and new members have joined. As a result of recent training, the governing body is growing in confidence and taking increased responsibility for challenging the school's leaders and holding them to account.

The governing body has also nominated a governor to become the school's 'parent champion' and a second to take on the role of 'staff champion'. Communication links between school and families are developing well. The parents who spoke to inspectors commented that they are pleased with the information that they are receiving. The school is now looking to enhance its website as it seeks to provide interested parties with relevant information.

### **External support**

Since the last monitoring inspection, the local authority has continued to provide timely and appropriate support to the school. In September 2014, a team from the local authority completed a comprehensive review of the school's work to date. This is the third review that the local authority has completed since the school was judged to require special measures in December 2013. The report provides a detailed and accurate appraisal of the school's progress. It also provides a clear focus on what the school needs to do next as it continues its improvement journey.

As part of its strategy to strengthen the school's leadership, the local authority has brokered the support of a headteacher from a local outstanding primary school. The relationship between the two schools has strengthened recently. Teachers are being encouraged to visit the partner school so that they can develop and improve their classroom skills. The acting headteacher is also benefiting from having access to an experienced and successful colleague.