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10 November 2014

Mrs Sharon Mullins  
Gateway Primary School  
Netheravon Close  
Carterton  
Oxfordshire  
OX18 3SF

Dear Mrs Mullins

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

Following my visit with Helen Bailey, Additional Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 November 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 November 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 local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose. The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Farr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to be at least good or better throughout the school and so raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring:
  - teaching is consistently challenging and activities move at a brisk pace to keep pupils engaged and focused on learning
  - teachers plan activities and ask questions to challenge pupils at their different ability levels
  - teachers make careful checks in lessons on pupils' understanding and intervene quickly to correct any misunderstanding
  - that teachers provided sufficient opportunities for pupils to use and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful context in a range of subjects
  - high quality marking is used consistently across the school to show pupils clearly how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve their work
  - staff receive more guidance and training on the school's policies for managing pupils' behaviour and for encouraging positive attitudes to learning so that all staff follow the policy in the same way.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - ensuring that school improvement plans show clearly the intended impact of actions on pupils' achievement
  - providing training for middle leaders and managers so that they improve their skills of monitoring and evaluation
  - ensuring the school's assessment and tracking system accurately reflects pupils' work
  - developing the role of the governing body further so that it supports and challenges the school more effectively.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 November 2014**

### **Evidence**

During this monitoring visit inspectors observed 13 lessons, including two jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, middle leaders, class teachers and the Chair of the Governing Body. They also spoke informally with a group of parents and carers at the beginning of the school day. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority and a Local Leader of Education (LLE) from R.A.F. Benson Community Primary School. Inspectors scrutinised school documentation including records of leaders' monitoring activity, minutes from the governing body and local authority reports and notes of visit. Inspectors met with pupils, spoke to pupils in lessons and scrutinised a sample of pupils' books from all year groups. Aspects of safeguarding were also checked.

### **Context**

One part-time teacher with responsibility for a Year 5 and 6 class left in July 2013. One teacher, with responsibility for a Year 2 class, has been absent since January 2013; a temporary teacher teaches this class. Four new teachers started in September, two with class responsibilities and two part-time specialist intervention teachers. The assistant headteacher relinquished part-time class teaching responsibilities from September 2014. From September 2014, the school, together with Carterton Primary School and Carterton Community College, federated their governing bodies to form 'Carterton Federation of Schools, Gateway to Excellence.'

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

Pupils' attainment has improved considerably since the last inspection and is higher than in previous years. End of year results show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now broadly average at the end of Year 6 and Year 2. More pupils are achieving levels expected for their age. However, variability between subjects persists, particularly for higher attaining pupils. For example, at the end of Year 6, too few pupils attain the higher levels in mathematics. Similarly, at the end of Year 2, too few pupils attain the higher levels in writing.

Attainment at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage has also noticeably improved. This is because there is now a greater emphasis on developing children's basic skills, particularly in writing. Writing areas have been established in each classroom and children have more opportunities to mark make and develop emergent writing skills. In one lesson, a pupil confidently used their phonics (the sounds that letters make) knowledge, to allow the teacher to scribe a sentence for a reading book they were writing together. Pupils enjoy these guided writing activities and enjoy sharing the reading books they have written with their families. Consequently, pupils are

developing their emergent reading and writing skills appropriately and greater proportions of children are now achieving the standards of which they are capable.

Standards in reading have improved considerably. Leaders have redesigned the school timetable to place a greater emphasis on reading. Reading sessions called 'word workshops' take place on a daily basis. During a Year 1 session, the teacher skilfully asked pupils to make predictions about what might happen next. As a result of more regular small group opportunities, pupils are now making better progress with reading skills. Pupils' phonetic skills are also improving steadily; however results in the phonics assessment at the end of Year 1 remain well below the national average.

You have wisely introduced a new system for monitoring the standards pupils are achieving with an emphasis on gathering information more frequently. Alongside this, well-judged local authority support has ensured that the information teachers provide is accurate. As a result, leaders have a more precise view of the standards pupils are achieving. Leaders have introduced regular meetings with teachers to discuss the progress that pupils are making. This did not happen in the past. As a result, teachers are developing a better understanding of how well pupils are learning and are more closely held to account for the standards they are achieving.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is improving overall and teachers are responding well to the extra support and challenge they now receive. Teachers spoke positively about the changes taking place and are keen to support senior leaders to improve the school further. In addition, leaders and governors have reorganised the school's class structure, with more pupils now taught in discrete year groups, rather than mixed year group classes. However, pockets of inadequate teaching remain.

As improvement to teaching takes root and consistency improves, leaders are rightly raising their expectations. For example, leaders have adjusted systems for marking pupils' work. There is greater emphasis on helping pupils improve their skills, as well as ensuring they know what they have done well; this is clearly evident in mathematics and English workbooks in every class. Pupils speak very positively about how useful this more detailed feedback is. However, inconsistency remains. Sometimes pupils do not receive such helpful advice, particularly in topic work. Equally, in some classes, pupils do not act upon the teacher's comments. When this is the case, progress slows.

You have revised the way that teachers plan. Teachers plan appropriate activities for pupils of different abilities; these include core tasks, as well as tasks which either extend the most able learners or support the lower attaining pupils. However, in some lessons, particularly in mathematics, the tasks for the most able pupils are not

challenging enough. When this is the case, pupils finish quickly and do not make the progress they are capable of. The impact of this new approach is still too variable.

Leaders have revised the homework policy; there is a greater emphasis on consolidating pupils' basic skills such as learning times tables or practising spellings. In addition, pupils are encouraged to read at home more regularly. Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the changes made. Homework club is particularly popular as pupils receive additional support from staff to complete tasks.

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

Leaders have introduced new systems for promoting good learning behaviour. Pupils have a growing awareness of good learning conduct and are keen to listen and concentrate well in lessons. Also, leaders are monitoring more closely patterns and trends in pupils' behaviour. As a result, the number of serious incidents has reduced. Pupils are positive about the changes made. They enjoy being in the 'green or purple zone' for learning behaviour, as this means they are learning well.

Pupils' behaviour around school is also improving. In assembly, pupils listened attentively and responded fittingly to questioning. Pupils were able to describe the value of determination and consider different ways of demonstrating and applying this value to school life.

Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now above the national average. Coming to school on a regular basis has a higher priority and leaders are more vigilant at monitoring attendance and more successful at tackling absence.

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

The headteacher is leading the school with determination and high levels of commitment. Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and assistant headteacher have considered sensibly what is right for Gateway pupils. Consequently, they have prioritised their work, concentrating on improving the quality of teaching through the school and the progress made by all pupils. A more robust cycle of monitoring activity, including lesson observations, supplemented by work scrutiny, takes place regularly and staff are provided with appropriate feedback. Equally, engagement with parents has improved; Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the changes that have taken place. New partnership events such as the maths calculation strategy evening are well attended and popular with families.

Leaders and governors have made well-judged changes to the school's leadership structure. There are clearer lines of accountability and leadership is more widely distributed than in the past. Middle leaders have more clearly defined roles and

senior leaders have allocated additional time to allow them to carry out their responsibilities effectively. Middle leaders have written helpful action plans and are beginning to implement some useful improvement actions. For example, the mathematics leader has worked closely with the local authority advisor to revise and implement a new mathematics calculation policy. This is helpful as there is now a more consistent approach to the teaching of the four rules. However, in some year groups, teachers' mathematical subject knowledge still needs developing further.

The school's action plan has a greater emphasis on making timely and focussed checks on the quality of teaching. Leaders have also introduced new approaches, particularly to the teaching of writing. In a Year 2 writing session, the teacher took every opportunity to move around the class, entering into helpful discussion with pupils and challenging them to improve their writing further. As a result, pupils were able to use a wider range of connectives in their writing, making it more interesting to the reader.

The newly formed federated governing body has completed a skills audit and agreed roles and responsibilities. Governors have also established relevant committees, agreeing clear terms of reference and setting a timetable of tasks for the year ahead. Despite this, governors need to undertake monitoring activities for themselves as soon as possible, in order to maintain the momentum of improvement, which leaders have set.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to monitor the school regularly. Following the judgment at the first monitoring inspection the local authority has now taken appropriate steps to ensure that the statement of action is fit for purpose. However, the school's action plan could be strengthened by ensuring that work to improve the quality of teaching, led by consultants, is included in the plan.

Support from numeracy and literacy consultants has been useful. Teachers are receiving helpful feedback, particularly on how to improve the quality of their lesson planning. Also, local authority consultants provide helpful support to middle leaders. A Local Leader of Education, commissioned by the local authority, provides high quality support to senior leaders, making regular visits to school.