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12 December 2014

Mr Duncan Mills  
Headteacher  
Niton Primary School  
Niton  
Ventnor  
Isle of Wight  
PO38 2BP

Dear Mr Mills

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

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 December 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 fourth 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 appoint one Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT), subject to a detailed plan being produced which outlines the support that this member of staff would receive.

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 and ensure that teachers raise pupils' achievement through rigorous systematic approaches by:
  - having consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in Years 3 and 4, and provide 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 consistently effectively.
- 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 December 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, groups of pupils, parents and carers, representatives from the governing body, and a member of the local authority.

### **Context**

The two previous headteachers have left the school. The substantive headteacher from The Bay Church of England Primary School on the Isle of Wight has agreed to become the headteacher at Niton Primary School for four days a week until July 2015. This change to leadership has resulted in staff and governors from the two schools working in partnership.

A new assistant headteacher has been appointed from within the school. Three full-time teachers and one part-time teacher have left the school. These teachers have been replaced by new teachers.

There have been significant changes to the governing body: these include a new Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair, a clerk to the governors, and a co-opted governor from the partner school.

The pupils are no longer taught in mixed-age classes but instead in seven discrete year groups.

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

Children continue to get a good start to their education. The current children in Reception started with levels of skills above those typical for their age, and are making good progress. Achievement in the Reception Year continues to prepare children very well for the next stage of their education. This is a result of good teaching and well-thought-out learning opportunities.

The 2014 unvalidated results indicate that the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 2 declined to broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for the most able pupils. Standards in phonics (sounds that letters make) continue to remain high in comparison to the national average. Regardless of the decline in attainment, many of these pupils made more rapid progress since the last inspection.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2014 was broadly average in reading and mathematics, but significantly lower in writing. In mathematics and writing, the most able pupils attained significantly less well than their peers nationally. There were

positive signs of improvements in the number of pupils making reasonable progress in reading; however, far too many pupils made inadequate progress in writing and mathematics from the end of Year 2. Nevertheless, these results represent many pupils making good or better progress while in Year 6. Leaders rightly recognise that attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling also requires improvement.

Current progress at Key Stage 1 is gaining momentum and continues to improve. Many pupils are on track to reach their end of year targets. This is as a result of improved teaching and a stronger focus on ensuring that the most able pupils receive work that challenges them in their learning. For example, in Year 1, pupils working on doubling numbers were challenged to solve number problems applying their understanding of odd and even numbers.

Current achievement at Key Stage 2, although variable, shows positive signs of improvement since the last inspection. This is particularly the case in reading where progress is strong. In writing and mathematics, small numbers of pupils are still not making sufficient progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4. These include the most able, boys, those eligible for the pupil premium disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, recent actions taken by leaders have helped to narrow this gap of underachievement. The introduction of targeted interventions, improved teaching and an enriched curriculum are leading to significant improvements for some.

Teachers have received training on how to teach writing when working with groups of pupils. The impact of this is evident in pupils' books, particularly in Years 5 and 6. In these year groups pupils are beginning to write with fluency and engage the reader through their use of imaginative language and stronger sentence construction. However, leaders recognise there is still much to do to completely eradicate past underachievement in this subject.

### **The quality of teaching**

There are noted improvements in the quality of teaching since the last visit, but these improvements are embryonic.

Where teaching is at its strongest, higher expectations by adults and stronger subject knowledge are resulting in more pupils making rapid progress in lessons. For example, in one lesson pupils created a bank of persuasive phrases to support their letter writing. In this lesson all pupils, regardless of their gender or ability, made good progress and wrote convincing letters. In another, a group of able boys challenged each other to use the most effective strategy to solve number problems.

Most teachers are now using targets within lessons known as 'must, should and could' to set higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is helping pupils to talk about their learning and understand what they need to learn next to improve

their work. This is also mirrored in pupils' work where they are beginning to check their own understanding of new concepts. More pupils are responding to adults' comments and successfully completing tasks they previously found difficult; this is especially the case in writing. Leaders are now considering further refinements to improve marking in mathematics. All classrooms now have 'working walls' in mathematics and literacy. Pupils were observed referring to these to support their learning.

In lessons that were less strong, pupils' learning was hindered by adults not providing sufficient examples of how pupils could improve their work. For example, in one lesson pupils found it difficult to improve their letter to Santa because they were unclear about the language and structure they needed to use to improve their writing. In other lessons the use of teaching assistants to extend pupils' learning remains variable, especially during whole-class teaching.

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

Pupils continue to be polite towards each other and play well together. They say they feel safe in school and know who they can turn to if they require help. Although pupils' behaviour is a strength, leaders recognise that more resources are required at break and lunchtimes to actively engage all pupils during this part of the school day.

The headteacher has started to evaluate and report on attendance and behaviour to governors. The robust systems, introduced in September to monitor behaviour, show that low level behavioural concerns are tackled promptly and appropriately. Pupils and parents and carers have commented on how class points and certificates encourage children to attend school more regularly. Parents and carers were particularly positive about the introduction of themed weeks such as 'Airports' and 'Dragon day' which resulted in their children being particularly eager to attend school. Many parents and carers spoken to during this visit were very positive about recent changes. As one parent or carer stated, 'I now feel welcome in the school.'

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

The new headteacher provides strong focused leadership. Within a short period of time he has successfully prioritised what leaders need to do to raise pupils' outcomes and improve teaching. The impact of this is very evident in pupils' work and in improved teaching across the school. A range of leaders are now actively sharing the responsibility for school improvement. This is being supported by a new tracking system introduced by the headteacher which clearly shows the progress that pupils are making from their starting points.

Senior leaders have been issued with new job descriptions and as a result have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This is being supported by a well-thought-out strategy for setting targets for teachers.

Leaders are now engaged in a regular cycle of monitoring involving lesson observations which are focused on the school priorities. In addition, each week they check the work of specific groups within the school and hold discussions with these pupils. Consequently, leaders at various levels now have a clearer understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The findings from monitoring activities have led to targeted support for teachers and changes in the way pupils are able to talk about their learning. Leaders can now point to improvements in teaching, marking and target setting.

Since the last visit, the capacity of leaders has been strengthened. For example, the newly appointed special educational needs coordinator has gathered a range of evidence to identify what pupils know and what they need to learn next. This has led to a clearer understanding of the support pupils need and greater clarity around how to measure the progress being made. New interventions have been introduced which have led to significant improvements in spelling and reading. The newly appointed Teaching and Learning Leader has already established a plan of action to support individual teachers linked to their needs as well as school priorities. Already this has resulted in improved teaching for the most able pupils in mathematics.

All teachers have been engaged in checking the accuracy of their assessments by sharing pupils' work and discussing the standards achieved. This work has also been externally validated by working with the local authority and teachers from the partner school. The local authority has agreed to support this work further, particularly for pupils in Year 4.

Governors now have a cycle of monitoring in place and have worked alongside the mathematics and literacy subject leaders. Joint learning walks have taken place with link governors in these subjects. As a result governors now have first-hand experience of the progress being made by pupils and are beginning to use external reports to help hold leaders to account. The expansion of the governing body and collaboration with The Bay Church of England Primary School have been positive moves in developing governors' skills and capacity. The Chair of the Governing Body meets weekly with the headteacher to check that progress and policies have been reviewed. However, there is still some work to be done to ensure that risk assessments are kept up to date.

Governors are aware they now need to review their resource allocation for the current staffing structure and the resources required to deliver the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school. This has been especially effective in developing leadership capacity. The senior leadership team

have developed their skills in observing lessons and supporting teachers to improve their practice. As a result of this, leaders are more engaged in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. Action plans have been written and leaders now have a stronger focus on accelerating pupils' progress. The local authority realises the need to continue providing key leaders with support. For example, the literacy and numeracy leaders require further help in identifying and eradicating the few remaining barriers to learning.

The local authority is committed to working closely with the governing body to secure the permanent leadership of the school before the next visit.