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19 March 2015

Ms S Tomkinson  
White Rock Primary School  
Davies Avenue  
Paignton  
TQ4 7AW

Dear Ms Tomkinson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of White Rock Primary School**

Following my visit with Jen Southall, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Liz Strange, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17 and 18 March 2015, 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 May 2014. 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 for vacancies arising in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

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 Torbay.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2014**

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good and outstanding in order to raise attainment at Key Stage 2 for all groups of pupils by:
  - making sure that activities are well planned at the right level and provide interest for all pupils, especially boys, to speed up progress in writing
  - ensuring pupils read widely and often and encouraging a good choice of books for more able readers
  - making sure that more able pupils have activities that challenge them in all subjects
  - making sure that assessments are precise and accurate
  - making sure that information from assessments is used well to plan work at the right level for all groups of pupils
  - ensuring teachers provide teaching assistants with the guidance they need to support pupils' learning effectively
  - ensuring teachers check regularly in lessons on pupils' progress and understanding so that tasks can be modified when necessary.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring middle leaders are trained so that all can contribute strongly to improvements in their subject across the whole school
  - improving the training of teaching assistants so that they can all effectively support groups of pupils so that learning for all pupils is speeded up.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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 management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, three members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the head of the Torbay teaching alliance. Discussions were held with leaders and subject leaders directly responsible for implementing the post-inspection action plan. An inspector met with the six newly qualified teachers who were appointed to the school before the last inspection, to review their professional development. Discussions were held with groups of pupils formally and during lessons to ascertain their views on learning, behaviour and safety. The school's progress data were reviewed. The single central record was checked. Inspectors visited 23 part lessons with school leaders. The inspectors reviewed pupils' written work.

### **Context**

Four teachers have left the school since the inspector's last visit in December 2014. Two of the posts are currently filled by temporary staff. The governing body have appointed an additional governor to the board.

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

Attainment has improved significantly, particularly in reading and writing. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 or above in mathematics, reading and writing tests at the end of Year 6 improved from 68% in 2013 to 82% in 2014. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher level also improved to be closer to the national average.

Attainment has risen because there is a highly effective strategy for accelerating pupils' reading and writing skills across the school. School leaders have acted swiftly to train adults to support the intervention programmes. Middle and higher ability pupils have responded quickly to the accurate teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Boys have engaged more with writing, spurred on by interesting topics.

Evidence from pupils' writing books and teachers' own assessments confirms that all groups of pupils are making at least nationally expected progress. Lower attaining pupils are gaining confidence as writers. They are writing at greater length and using interesting vocabulary to convey their ideas.

Pupils, particularly those of middle and higher ability, are not yet realising their full potential, as they do not write high quality pieces across a range of subjects and topics. This is due to a narrow range of writing experiences in science, history and

geography. Teachers do not always expect enough of these pupils, which limits the extent to which pupils can produce successful pieces of written work.

All pupils are making accelerated progress with their reading skills. The teaching of letters and their sounds, referred to as phonics, is precise, accurate and regular. All those pupils re-taking their phonics tests in Year 2 reached the required standard. The proportion on track to reach the required standard in Year 1 is exceeding last year's national average. This is a notable improvement on previous years.

The investment in reading books to suit all ages and abilities has paid off. All those spoken to about their reading confirmed how much more motivated they were to read, to read well and challenge themselves to understand harder books. The attention to reading for meaning and understanding has benefitted the quality of pupils' written work. Teachers use the opportunities in phonics lessons and small group reading sessions to draw attention to the use of grammar and interesting vocabulary.

In mathematics lessons, there are middle and higher ability pupils whose learning is not as rapid as that of those who are receiving additional support. This is a result of pupils' uncertainties in linking ideas and concepts and applying their understanding. Pupils are not provided with enough time in lessons to talk about mathematics in depth.

Disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to other pupils. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and that of others continues to narrow in all year groups. The funding is used effectively to provide additional support in lessons for those pupils who are behind and small group lessons for more able pupils to help them reach the very highest levels.

### **The quality of teaching**

The transformation of teaching in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is well underway. There is an infectious appetite amongst staff to get their teaching right. Rather than waiting to be told how they should improve their teaching, they are discussing and reflecting between themselves and then applying new ideas in their classrooms. The newly qualified teachers are a positive force in maintaining the debate on how to improve learning in lessons.

The improved lesson planning, combined with clearer instructions given to pupils in lessons, means more learning is going on. Teachers' strengthening subject knowledge and their enthusiasm help to inspire and motivate pupils, ensuring that best use is made of the time available.

An analysis of pupils' writing books, from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6, shows that the match of work has improved for the lower and middle ability

pupils. Pupils told inspectors that writing tasks frequently captured their imagination and teachers helped them by 'providing lots of ideas'. Pupils engage with their writing, because they are clear about what is expected of them and conscientiously adhere to the targets they have been given. More able pupils are quick to recognise when work does not challenge them. Teachers give good quality time to support all pupils in preparing for longer pieces of writing and ensure that there are plenty of examples of successful writing. However, teachers often do not provide enough guidance to help the more able pupils excel.

Teachers and teaching assistants match work accurately to the needs of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs. Much of the teaching for these pupils is carried out in class, with an expectation that the pupils will complete the same tasks as other pupils in the lesson. The supporting strategies work well in encouraging the pupils to make decisions for themselves. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, the manipulation of resources very successfully helped one pupil deepen his understanding of how to make different number values as quickly as others in the class.

During lessons, teachers give regular reminders of what pupils need to improve on. This is also the case in much of the marked written work. Discussions between teachers and pupils form a key part of all lessons. However, there is variation in the quality of these discussions in mathematics lessons. In the better examples, teachers' questions encourage deeper thinking or help the pupils make connections between mathematical concepts by asking pupils to explain their solutions. In these cases, this helps teachers assess pupils' learning.

Displays of pupils work around the school celebrate good quality writing. The high expectations teachers now have of pupils' presentation is emphasised well. The mathematics boards in classes are similarly thoughtfully set out. These visual displays serve as a reminder to pupils how they could use apparatus to explain their thinking. Teachers rightly focus on how pupils solve various calculations or set about solving problems.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not well focused on the needs of the children. Adults make insufficient use of the information they gain from observing children at play or during the teacher-led tasks to modify the activities inside and outside. The curriculum lacks breadth and depth. Children's learning is happening through isolated tasks but activities do not link securely in order that children can explore and follow through ideas from one area to another. Adults are not yet working as a cohesive team to support the learning of all the children in the setting and help them deepen their learning at all points in the day. Daily management of the provision, particularly when children move between activities, is not effective and there are too many times when children are not involved in purposeful learning.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils arrive in school happy and enthusiastic to learn. The early morning routines ensure a calm start, with all pupils settling quickly to their tasks.

Pupils are polite. Their behaviour towards each other reflects well on the school's recent learning focus: tolerance, diversity and respect. They are keen to talk about their learning in school and how they are helped by adults to make progress. In lessons, there are a few pupils, mostly boys, who cause the learning of others to slow because they are chatting about topics unrelated to the work in hand.

Pupils are safe in school. Older pupils look after younger ones at playtimes. There are good levels of supervision in and around the school. Pupils and adults know who to go to if they have concerns about keeping each other safe. Attendance is average.

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

The headteacher has galvanised all staff to raise their expectations of their own performance and that of their pupils. She has an unwavering dedication and passion for every pupil to achieve success. Staff and pupils have risen to the challenges she sets, work hard, and are ambitious to make everyone's time at school a success.

Leaders are astute in their observations of learning. Leaders challenge teachers to improve the quality of learning in class through well-informed feedback and highly effective professional development. Teachers apply good practice observed in the school and in other schools, which is helping raise pupils' achievement.

Teachers assess pupils' work accurately. Leaders use the information to set achievable targets and check that teachers' planning reflects the high expectations. Leaders make smart use of the school improvement funds to secure additional time for teachers to plan lessons.

Teaching assistants have benefited from training programmes aimed at improving their effectiveness in supporting speech, reading, writing and the education, health and care needs of those pupils with a disability and pupils with special educational needs. Teaching assistants are confident in the purpose of their work. When working with individuals, they ask questions that deepen the pupils' thinking and step back when they judge that pupils have enough information to work independently. The headteacher has strong communication skills. Parents value the chance to raise any concerns directly or through the parents' forum. Parents are confident that the headteacher and staff will listen to their comments and act on them appropriately and quickly. More parents, who may have been reluctant to engage with school in the past, are helping their child's learning at home.

Middle leaders are benefitting from a range of activities that strengthen their capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The small subject teams they manage are working effectively to ensure key actions are translated quickly into lessons. Their diligence is improving the team working in the school.

A dedicated group of governors has made a strong commitment to improving governors' oversight and checks on the school. They have taken part in a penetrating self-review of governance and their use of the pupil premium funding. Importantly, they have acted on the findings. They visit school regularly to check on developments and see at first hand the impact of action taken to improve learning.

Governors are gaining an oversight of performance management arrangements. They have a good understanding of the value gained from investments in staff training and how this is to be measured against improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. This work has been hastened through an effective training programme provided by the teaching alliance.

Governors receive reports on the school's effectiveness from a variety of sources, including those requested by the local authority. The reports describe accurately the journey the school is on. The reports do not provide governors with sufficient evaluation of how the actions taken are leading to improved achievement of pupils as detailed in the school's improvement plan.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided highly effective support through the Torbay teaching alliance. The training programme to equip the deputy headteacher to manage the six newly qualified teachers has been a key factor in establishing a supportive and challenging partnership. The professional development programme for these teachers is rooted in first-hand observations of their teaching and weekly discussions of pupils' learning. The programme of training is carefully tailored to their individual needs. A visit programme combines with an expectation that the teachers will use the experience to share with all staff. This has contributed to the appetite for reflecting on practice within the school.

Leadership and management training for subject leaders is provided by the teaching alliance. It has strengthened the capacity of the school to respond swiftly to insightful evaluations of pupils' achievements and the school's action plan. Particularly beneficial for subject leaders has been the chance to observe lessons alongside specialists and to visit other schools and observe best practice. The local authority has brokered an additional member to the governing body who brings expertise in financial accountability. This action has strengthened the governing body's confidence to ask demanding questions about the school's budget. This scrutiny is welcomed by school leaders.

**Only in exceptional circumstances, where they are crucial to the school's future success, should priorities for further improvement be added**

- Take action to rapidly improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage.