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18 June 2015

Mrs S Matthews  
Headteacher  
Somerford Primary School  
Draper Road  
Christchurch  
BH23 3AS

Dear Mrs Matthews

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

Following my visit with Ken Bryan, additional inspector, to your school on 16 – 17 June 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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.

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 Dorset.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure teachers:
  - use information from assessments to plan suitable work that is not too easy or too difficult, and which sustains pupils' interest
  - encourage pupils to build up their skills and understanding quickly, particularly in writing
  - explain ideas clearly and check frequently that pupils understand what they are learning about
  - ensure that pupils understand the purpose of the tasks they are given and how they contribute to their learning
  - ensure that pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects as they do in English and mathematics and adjust the work accordingly when not all pupils are learning well and give children in the Early Years Foundation Stage more chances to talk about what they are doing to develop their speaking skills
  - mark pupils' work accurately with clear guidance so that they know what they have to do to improve.
- Enable all groups of pupils, including the most and least able, to make good progress and achieve well by:
  - improving pupils' knowledge of number facts in mathematics so that they are better able to apply these skills when solving problems
  - making sure that the adults who support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs share information about the progress these pupils make with teachers so that they are able to build on these achievements further in class.
- Improve the overall behaviour and safety of pupils by:
  - making sure that pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and are enthusiastic to learn
  - improving rates of attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average by working more closely with pupils and their families to reduce absence.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - ensuring that all leaders gather and share information about the achievement of different groups of pupils to compare rates of progress and tackle any underachievement
  - taking swift action if any groups are not doing as well as they should
  - ensuring that plans for English and mathematics include clear actions to raise pupils' attainment and that staff are held to account for achieving targets
  - making sure that middle leaders make regular checks on teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
  - ensuring that performance management procedures are used effectively to improve the quality of teaching.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 16 – 17 June 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including school improvement action plans and the findings of the external review of governance. Meetings were held with the headteacher, governor representatives including the Chair of the Governing Body, teachers, teaching assistants, senior and middle leaders, pupils and a representative from the local authority. An inspector also met with a small number of parents and the pupils' behaviour was observed by inspectors during breaks and lunchtimes.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit in March 2015 two teaching assistants and one technician have left the school. The assistant headteacher has relinquished her leadership responsibilities and will leave the school at the end of July 2015. The leader for infants has incorporated these additional leadership responsibilities into her role. A new special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has been appointed from within the school. A new Chair of the Governing Body took up his responsibilities in April 2015. Two parent governor vacancies remain. The number of pupils on roll is stable at 439.

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

The most recent checks on pupils' learning indicate that more pupils are now making good progress in lessons. This is because a culture of high expectations for what pupils might achieve is securely embedded throughout the school. A rigorous cycle of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is being successfully maintained by senior leaders. It leads to professional development for all staff that encourages, challenges and supports staff to improve. Standards for pupils in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics are rising. It is a similarly positive and improving picture for pupils in Years 1 to 5 and in the Reception classes. Targeted interventions for pupils who have not made the good progress expected of them have been very successful, especially in reading. The good learning and progress made by children in the Reception classes has been confirmed and validated externally by local authority representatives. Since the previous monitoring visit, teachers have ensured that the learning and achievement of children in all areas of the early years' curriculum is now accurately captured and recorded in children's personalised 'Learning Journey' books.

Teachers continue to accurately identify the learning needs of all pupils including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The achievement of these pupils continues to be well provided for. The frequent checks by senior leaders on pupils' learning and progress have identified pupils' writing skills

and the overall achievement of the most-able pupils as priorities for improvement in the next academic year.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching throughout the school continues to improve. Leaders have effectively addressed the areas for development identified during the previous monitoring visit in March 2015. For example, teaching assistants have received additional training in order to provide more effective support to pupils in the teaching of reading and to promote positive play at break times. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to ensure all pupils receive the correct support or challenge they need to make good progress. Teaching assistants say they appreciate being provided with copies of lesson plans and targets for individual pupils as it allows them to provide the right kind of support to pupils and give useful feedback to teachers.

Teachers prepare lessons that will engage and maintain pupils' interests. For example, in Year 1 pupils are learning all about pirates. The class teacher captured pupils' imagination and enthusiastically taught them about multiplication and division using 'bags of gold'. However, not all pupils had access to the practical resources that would have helped them consolidate their new learning and so make more secure progress.

Where learning is at its best, teachers question pupils effectively to probe, support and challenge them to give of their very best. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson, pupils excitedly performed aspects of the plays they had written based on the Greek myth of Cyclops. The teachers' good subject knowledge and the effective work of the teaching assistant to support pupils' learning meant all pupils made good progress in developing their understanding of the play as well as features of a play script.

Teachers continue to mark pupils' written work to a high standard that provides pupils with clear guidance on what they have to do to improve. The pupils who met with the inspector said they are given regular opportunities to respond to their teachers' comments at the start of each day. The presentation of pupils' written work in their books is not of a consistently good standard. Too few pupils are competent in using a cursive handwriting style. Most pupils display weak spelling skills when writing which is hindering their overall progress and achievement in writing.

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

Around the school at break and lunchtime pupils are typically polite and respectful to adults and one another. Most of the time pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. This is because all staff consistently uphold high expectations for how pupils

should behave. Lunchtime supervisors have received further training to make lunch a positive and enjoyable experience for everyone. Younger children are taught table manners and when outside adults participate in games and provide a broad range of play equipment for pupils to use. As a result, pupils say that lunchtimes are now more enjoyable and that they feel safe in school because their teachers manage behaviour well and act quickly to sort out issues when they arise. However, some older pupils who spoke with inspectors also said that a very small minority of pupils still occasionally behave inappropriately. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning through regular opportunities to reflect on their work.

Pupils' punctuality and attendance remain areas for improvement for the school. Senior leaders are continuing to work successfully with external partners to address aspects of these areas of concern. The surgeries that take place every month to support families whose children do not attend regularly have been particularly successful. As a result, the number of persistent absentees has halved in the past year and this number continues to fall. Parents who spoke with inspectors said they have no real concerns about the school. They are pleased with the progress their children are making, especially in reading. Some parents said they would like more guidance from the school on how they might support their children's learning at home.

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

The headteacher continues to uphold a vision for excellence and high expectations. All staff benefit from a programme of professional development and training. Staff who spoke with the inspectors say they continue to feel well supported by senior colleagues. The headteacher keeps a close check on the range of subjects taught across the school. For example, the headteacher works closely with every year group to plan religious education in order to demonstrate best practice. Senior leaders continue to train and support middle leaders to carry out regular checks on the quality of teaching throughout the school. This has led to more confident leaders who are better prepared to challenge and support colleagues who are underperforming. All staff are aware that standards in writing throughout the school and the achievement of the most-able pupils are priorities for improvement.

The senior leadership team has worked to ensure colleagues promote fun and excitement in their lessons and promote ambition among pupils. Whole-school assemblies promoting Christian and British values are having a positive impact on the way pupils behave towards one another. The school's behaviour log and other records reflect the improvement in pupils' behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. All staff keep a record of their professional development. Senior leaders acknowledge the information gathered in these records has not been analysed closely to identify teachers' strengths and personal areas for development. Middle leaders continue to gain experience in carrying out lesson observations with local authority representatives which is helping them to develop their coaching skills.

Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. Senior leaders have incorporated into the safeguarding and behaviour policies the most up-to-date government guidance. All adults follow policy guidance to manage pupils' behaviour and uphold the school's high expectations for how they and pupils should behave.

### **External support**

The school continues to receive effective support and challenge from the local authority and an outstanding teaching school. For example, the local authority has provided financial support for teachers to attend a national training event and additional resources for new library books. An external review of governance has recently been successfully completed. Governors continue to work with the Department for Education and a local outstanding school to explore the possibility of becoming an academy.