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Mrs Christine Dean  
Executive Headteacher  
Milton Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Dean

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

Following my visit with Russell Hinton, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 2–3 December, 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 March 2015. 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 taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The school may not appoint a newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and the 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 Stoke on Trent.

Yours sincerely

Heather Simpson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2015

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is at least consistently good and ensures that pupils achieve well in Key Stage 2 by:
  - ensuring that the work given to pupils matches their varying needs and abilities, so that work is never too easy for the most able nor too difficult for other pupils, including those who find learning more challenging
  - ensuring that pupils develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics systematically as they move through Key Stage 2
  - raising teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour and of their accurate use of punctuation, correct grammar and the quality of their handwriting
  - improving marking so that pupils are given good guidance about how they can improve their work, especially the quality of their writing and the precision of their spelling
  - making sure that teaching assistants always provide good support for pupils in lessons, including providing timely help for those who find learning more difficult.
- Urgently improve the impact of leadership and management, including governance, so that advancements made by the school are effective and rapid by:
  - making sure that governors further develop their role so that they can challenge the school to improve teaching and pupils' achievement effectively
  - making certain that subject leaders work closely with teachers in order to improve their practice
  - providing appropriate training and time for subject leaders so that they can fulfil their roles effectively
  - making sure that the pupil premium funding is used effectively to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
  - ensuring that the use and impact of the primary PE and sport funding is evaluated rigorously, and as a result, is used effectively to improve the quality of the teaching of PE across the school and hence impact positively on pupils' well-being.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 2–3 December 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher; all members of the leadership team; groups of pupils; parents; the Chair of the Governing Body and other members; and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors visited all classes, spoke to pupils both in lessons and around the school, and heard them read. Documents and records relating to pupils' achievement, teaching, leadership, attendance and safeguarding were scrutinised.

### **Context**

The school continues to be supported by Greenways Primary School, whose headteacher is the interim headteacher at Milton. Since the previous monitoring visit, the deputy headteacher has retired and one class teacher has left the school. Appointments made include a new deputy headteacher, a third assistant headteacher and two class teachers, one of whom is newly qualified. Training and support have been brokered by the local authority from the Teaching School Alliance.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Achievement is beginning to rise. All pupils in Year 6 in 2015, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs, made at least expected progress from their different starting points. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 improved overall, especially in reading and mathematics. As a result, standards in these subjects are now in line with national averages and the attainment gap is closing. However, standards in writing now show a three-year decline. Attainment in 2015 in writing was significantly below other schools nationally.

In 2015, pupils in Key Stage 1 made expected progress from their starting points. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in all subjects were similar to those in 2014 and remained in line with the national average. However, Year 2 pupils' attainment was already in line with the national average at the end of their Reception Year, so this represents expected rather than good progress for these pupils. The proportion of pupils achieving the level required in the Year 1 reading check has increased year on year and is now above the national average. This is because reading is taught well from the outset. Results for children in the early years show that they made good progress. Almost three quarters of the Reception children achieved a good level of development, which is higher than last year and above the national average. Girls' achievement was particularly high but boys and disadvantaged children achieved less well, especially in writing.

Current school assessment data show that too few pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. Less than half of pupils in Years 4 to 6 are working at age-appropriate levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This is due to historic underperformance and raised expectations of the new curriculum. The proportions of pupils working at age-appropriate levels in Years 1 to 3 are also low. This is evidenced in their books and show that some pupils still lack basic skills, such as correct number formation, decoding of unfamiliar words and accurate use of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Tracking procedures are in place for most groups of pupils except the most able. This is a key group as, over time, too few have reached the higher levels, especially in writing. The senior leadership team have put measures in place to accelerate progress, for example through intervention programmes for pupils, mentoring sessions for teachers and fortnightly progress checks.

Pupils' work shows that progress remains good in the early years and has improved in Years 5 and 6. However, progress slows in Years 1 to 4 and is, on occasion, inadequate for some pupils. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and the attainment of other pupils remains wide in some year groups, for example Year 1, especially in writing, and Years 3 and 4. Decisive action has been taken to address the needs of disadvantaged pupils in the school. Pupils who need support have been accurately identified and they now receive additional help to enable them to catch up quickly. It is too early to judge the impact of this support.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

Teaching remains variable. There is some excellent practice in the early years, where teachers and support staff have created a nurturing and supportive environment for children to learn and thrive. Activities are well planned, stimulating and capture children's interests and imagination. In contrast, pupils in Year 1 do not make the progress of which they are capable because of some significant weaknesses in teaching. Pupils' books show that sometimes pupils complete very little work and this limits their progress, especially in Years 1 to 4. This is because teachers spend too long on preparatory work before presenting the main activity to pupils. For example, during visits to lessons, inspectors and members of the leadership team noted that in some classes pupils began their main task 10 minutes before break or lunchtime. Consequently, pupils did not have enough time to complete the activity or demonstrate their levels of understanding.

All teachers have had support with lesson planning and a common format is now used in all classes. This planning takes account of the needs of different groups of pupils except the most able. Teachers also set short assessment tasks at the start of lessons to find out precisely what pupils know and can do. Where this is most successful, teachers use the information gained to adjust work and reshape tasks within the lesson, especially in Years 5 and 6. This ensures that pupils are moved on when they show they are ready, or pupils receive additional help with work which

they find difficult. However, pre-assessment tasks are not used accurately in all classes and some teachers do not use the valuable information gathered to set appropriate work. For example, in Year 4, the assessment tasks seen in pupils' mathematics books did not always relate directly to what pupils were supposed to be learning.

In order to raise attainment in Key Stage 2, a rigorous recruitment process has been carried out, and skilled and experienced teachers and leaders have been appointed to bolster the quality of teaching. This has allowed leaders to provide more effective support for pupils in Key Stage 2, but particularly in Year 6. The deputy headteacher provides additional support with writing in Year 6 and the mathematics leader runs after-school lessons to help boost pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills. Teachers' assessments are becoming increasingly accurate. A system for assessing pupils' abilities has been successfully introduced and results are collected each half term. The support of local schools and the local authority adviser has been rightly used to validate teachers' judgements, especially in writing.

A wide range of training has been provided for all staff, both teaching and support staff. Much of this training has been focused on the development of reading and writing. Class texts have been introduced and are used as a theme to support reading, but they also permeate other areas of the curriculum. For example, Year 2 pupils are reading *Jack and the Beanstalk* and in mathematics had to share the 'magic beans' between the four characters. This helped them develop their fraction skills. A love of reading is also promoted with regular reading time and pupils discussing their books in groups. Adults also model reading for pleasure on Friday afternoons. Strategies such as these are beginning to help raise standards in Key Stage 2 and pupils say they are enjoying their lessons more.

In order to improve pupils' writing, a new handwriting policy has been devised, together with a spelling scheme in Key Stage 2. Staff are increasingly picking up and addressing common spelling, grammar and punctuation errors. Presentation rules are stuck inside the covers of pupils' books and they receive stickers when they present their very best effort. This is not yet consistent across the school and, on occasion, worksheets are stuck in books shoddily and some pupils' handwriting is still very untidy.

A new mathematics scheme was introduced in the spring term and this helps teachers plan an appropriate sequence of lessons. Nevertheless, in some lessons pupils become confused when teachers do not explain the work clearly or rush the pace of the lesson and try to cover too many concepts. As a result, pupils struggle with their work. Additional resources and equipment have been purchased and practical apparatus is used well to support pupils' mathematical development, especially in Key Stage 1. Teaching assistants lead 'rapid recall' sessions for pupils who need to improve their mental mathematical skills and improve the speed of their

responses. However, the scheme used for this offers very low-level challenge and does not always take into account pupils who have much slower processing skills.

A new marking policy has been introduced and work checked in books shows that this is becoming more established across the school. Pupils understand the policy and symbols used, and are increasingly responding to the comments or 'next steps' set by teachers. Most pupils are given time to revisit and make improvements to their work. Pupils' targets are set and teachers check these when marking pupils' work, but this is not yet used consistently across the school.

Support staff are now being used more efficiently and effectively. Many of them work with small groups of individuals, especially those who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs, both inside the classroom and in withdrawal groups. As a result, these groups make similar progress to their peers. Support staff are fully included in professional development and they have received bespoke training from the Teaching School Alliance to improve their level of skills and knowledge. Weekly meetings are held with agenda items focused on school improvement priorities, for example leading interventions, effective marking and managing behaviour. Support staff have been made to feel part of the school and they have responded with loyalty and commitment. Targets have not yet been introduced for support staff but senior leaders are keen to have the same systems in place to hold support staff to account as teachers.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils' behaviour remains good. Pupils are polite, courteous and enjoy school. They frequently hold doors open for visitors and staff and are happy to discuss their work. Pupils say that school is 'amazing'. They like their teachers and show good levels of respect for all adults and each other. They have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including physical, verbal and cyber-bullying. They know who they can talk to if they have a problem and some know the number of 'ChildLine' as they have had a recent talk from the NSPCC. Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe, including when using the internet. Parents also agree that their children are safe and previous bullying incidents have been addressed.

Pupils show care and pride in their school. They move around the school sensibly and play together happily at break times. Pupils are keen to do well and most apply themselves fully in lessons. There are some pupils in Year 1, however, who quickly lose interest and do not complete very much work when the teaching does not motivate them. This results in low-level disruption and pupils do not make sufficient progress.

Although attendance last year was below average, it is now improving and is average. Effective procedures are in place to follow up pupils who are absent. Pupils are responding well to the incentives offered, such as certificates and the termly prizes for pupils whose attendance is over 97%. Punctuality has also improved as leaders track and record those who are constantly late.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

Since joining the school in January 2015, the executive headteacher has effectively created a culture of high expectations among staff and pupils. As a result, staff confidence and morale have improved and pupils and parents overwhelmingly note the improvements taking place. The good practice identified in teaching is regularly shared at staff meetings through 'star stories'. New systems and procedures introduced are helping to drive up the quality of teaching and achievement, and early signs of recovery are encouraging.

Subject leaders have received valuable training to help them carry out their roles more effectively. For example, the mathematics leader has attended training to improve her use of data, motivate colleagues and deepen pupils' understanding and knowledge. Subject leaders have also worked in close partnership with colleagues at Greenways and other local schools. The executive headteacher and other leaders have visited other schools to see good practice. This has resulted in all leaders extending their knowledge and understanding, and gathering ideas to improve teaching and raise achievement at Milton Primary.

Most subject leaders have been involved in some paired monitoring activities, such as brief visits to lessons and looking at pupils' work with members of the senior leadership team and local authority advisers. Subject leaders also provide suitable advice and support to colleagues to help them with planning and sequencing of lessons. Some members of the senior leadership team have modelled and demonstrated good teaching for colleagues, but this is in the very early stages of development and has not yet been sufficiently shared by subject leaders.

Following the recommended review of pupil premium funding, a school policy is now in place, eligible pupils are identified and effective support is provided. Regular assessments are carried out and pupils' achievement is carefully tracked. Leaders are aware of the differences in the attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils and are closely monitoring these. The support provided is not yet assessed to determine which support programmes are most successful. The school's website now contains the information required by parents about how funding is spent and the impact this is having on eligible pupils' achievement.



The sports premium is used to provide a wide range of activities and promote pupils' physical development and well-being. Teachers regularly observe and work alongside the sports coaches employed by the school. A rota of activities ensures that all pupils have at least two hours of quality physical education each week. For example, this term, Years 1 and 2 are concentrating on dance skills. The report of spending is now published on the school's website for 2015/16. It is not yet possible to publish the impact of how the funding has been used as this is being monitored over the year.

Governors have acted swiftly to improve their effectiveness. Under the skilled leadership of the Chair of the Governing Body, they have taken a self-reflective approach to identifying areas for improvement. They have commissioned their own audit and drawn up a detailed action plan. A further review of their performance is planned early in the New Year. Governors increasingly ask challenging questions and meet with subject leaders to discuss current developments. The Chair of the Governing Body holds a monthly surgery to meet parents and address any concerns. The reducing numbers of parents attending these surgeries is symptomatic of the reducing concerns of parents about the school. Governors hold monthly meetings with senior leaders to ensure that they are kept fully informed about the school's performance. They have a growing understanding of data, but both governors and senior leaders acknowledge that this information needs streamlining and presenting in a more succinct format. There are currently three vacancies on the governing body but the same rigorous appointment process is being carried out to ensure that the school is supported by high-calibre individuals.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to provide valuable and effective support. The adviser knows the school well and rightly has confidence in the leadership team. She keeps a careful eye on the school's performance in the monthly task group meetings. Training and support for teaching assistants have been brokered from the Teaching School Alliance and have helped staff have a better understanding of their roles and greater accountability. Training has also been provided for middle leaders in response to the key issue identified in the previous inspection. The partnership between the local authority and the school is working effectively and is contributing to the progress being made in pupils' achievement, teaching and leadership.