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Mr Henrik Rademacher  
Dorney School  
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Maidenhead  
Berkshire  
SL6 0DY

Dear Mr Rademacher

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Dorney School**

Following my visit with Sue Cox, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 20–21 April 2016, 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 that 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 that took place in June 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Buckinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Dulon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in June 2015.**

- Raise achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics for the most able pupils, by ensuring all teaching is good or better by:
  - ensuring all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what all pupils can and should achieve and how quickly they should work and learn
  - setting suitably challenging tasks for all pupils, especially the most able, based on accurate assessments of their abilities and what they need to learn next
  - ensuring tasks capture pupils' interest and engage them throughout lessons
  - ensuring teachers' marking helps pupils to improve their work
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in extended pieces of work
  - providing opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge and skills to solve problems.
- Support pupils to develop more positive attitudes to learning by ensuring that they are encouraged to work harder and take pride and care in their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - establishing a clear direction and ethos for the school that encourages excellence in all areas
  - ensuring that all leaders and managers receive support to be effective in their roles
  - using the information gathered through systematic monitoring and evaluation to identify clear steps for improving provision and outcomes
  - managing teachers' performance robustly and setting challenging, but realistic, targets for improvement in the quality of teaching
  - further developing the skills and knowledge of all governors so that they hold the school to account for all areas of its work.

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.

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 second monitoring inspection on 20–21 April 2016**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders, middle leaders, pupils, governors and a representative of Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. Inspectors spoke with 12 parents on the playground and considered 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. A range of documents were looked at including pupils' achievement information and governors' minutes. Inspectors visited 11 lessons, six jointly with senior leaders, and looked at pupils' exercise books with the English and mathematics leaders.

### **Context**

A permanent teacher for the Year 5 class started this week. A new part-time teacher replaced a temporary part-time teacher in Year 2 after Easter. A new chair of the governing body has been elected following the recent resignation of the previous post-holder.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leaders and managers have sustained a steady pace of improvement. At the start of this term, senior leaders refreshed and reviewed their aims so that they are better suited to their developing school. The senior leadership team is now well established and it is working together well to implement the action plan. Staff and parents continue to express confidence in leaders and recognise that positive changes are taking place. Senior leaders set a clear example to staff, showing them what they expect. For example, the assistant headteacher was seen taking an active role at break time, supporting pupils and joining in with the Year 6 ball game. Consequently, staff are implementing the behaviour policy with greater consistency. Some staff are starting to show increased initiative. The special needs leader created some effective guidance for supply teachers because she rightly recognised that they were not clear about key routines.

Middle leaders' roles are beginning to develop further. For example, the special educational needs coordinator is now also responsible for disadvantaged pupils and has clear aims to improve the support that they receive. This includes implementing the recommendations from the review of pupil premium spending. However, these ambitions are at risk of not being realised because senior leaders are not providing sufficient support for this role.

The deputy headteacher has refined the assessment system so that leaders and teachers can measure pupils' progress. Leaders have also clearly identified different groups of pupils. For example, teachers and leaders have identified some of the most able pupils and are checking whether these pupils are on track to exceed the expectations for their age. Leaders are also tracking the progress of some key groups through the school. This allows them to identify any disparities between certain groups such as disadvantaged pupils and their classmates. Nevertheless, the system to measure progress is still not providing leaders with all the information that they need. For example, the progress of the most able pupils is not yet measured.

Leaders are starting to make use of pupils' achievement information. Senior leaders identified that boys were not achieving as well as girls in writing. An action plan was devised and implemented quickly to raise teachers' expectations of boys. As a result, this gap in attainment has already narrowed. Middle leaders can explain patterns of achievement and are starting to use these to identify where improvements can be made.

Buckinghamshire Learning Trust continues to provide considerable support to leaders, particularly with checking the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders are using information to refine the challenge and support that each teacher receives to improve their performance. The English leader recently checked pupils' writing to see whether teachers had implemented some necessary changes. However, the check was not sufficiently focused on the impact that teaching is having on pupils' learning and it did not provide detailed and helpful feedback to individual teachers.

Governors are increasingly challenging leaders and refining the way that they work. They have implemented more of the recommendations from the review of governance. Each governor now has a clear role. Governors have received training from the national leader of education at Chepping View School. This has increased their understanding of their responsibilities. As a result, governors are more demanding of the headteacher. They have requested more detailed information from the headteacher so that they can check the progress that leaders are making against the areas for improvement at each meeting. Nevertheless, due to the recent change to the leadership of the governing body, not all governors have all the skills that they need. Furthermore, governors have not arranged the pupil premium training that was recommended in the review. This limits their ability to maintain effective oversight of the impact that this additional funding is having.

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

The quality of teaching and learning is rising. In some classes, teachers have acted on feedback and made some effective changes to their teaching. Consequently, more pupils in these classes are achieving the standards expected for their age. Where teaching is strongest, teachers use time well in lessons to maximise pupils' learning. Some teachers use assessment astutely within their lessons to better match pupils' learning needs. For example, the Year 6 teacher took time to provide individual pupils with detailed feedback, while they were redrafting their stories, so that they could improve their writing.

Some teachers show high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and set suitably challenging and interesting tasks for pupils. For example, in Year 4, pupils enjoyed learning to punctuate speech correctly in a lesson based on their class book, 'The angel of Nitshill Road'. The teacher asked the pupils to rewrite a conversation between two characters that showed clearly how they were feeling. Pupils relished this challenge and showed positive attitudes, working diligently to complete this demanding task. In some classes, teachers are planning tasks that are appropriately challenging for the most able pupils. In a Year 2 English lesson, the teacher ensured that the most able pupils used more complex sentence structures to report on the book character, 'the gruffalo'. One pupil said, 'In addition, he has sharp, pointed claws so that he can hunt for food.'

Nevertheless, the quality of teaching is still too variable. Where teaching is weak, there are few examples of progress against the areas for improvement. Senior leaders have put into place plans and support to help these teachers to develop. The plans provide specific guidance and are regularly reviewed. However, the plans are not sharply focused on prioritising essential improvements. Moreover, the leaders providing support have not worked closely enough with these teachers. As a result, their impact is limited.

Improvements in the teaching of writing and in the impact of marking are more consistently applied as leaders have prioritised these aspects of the school's work. Pupils have regular opportunities to write at length. Increasingly, pupils practise writing in other subjects. For example, Year 4 pupils wrote as if they were a seed, providing lively accounts of the life cycle of a plant. As a result, attainment in writing has risen in some classes. Pupils say that marking helps them improve their writing, particularly their punctuation. This accurately reflects evidence in pupils' writing books that shows that pupils are responding to teachers' feedback and making changes to their work. Many suggestions for improvement are currently focused on punctuation. There is little evidence of marking improving pupils' learning in mathematics.

Pupils who have special educational needs or disability now receive some additional support. Teaching assistants have worked closely with the special educational needs coordinator to make sure that these pupils are getting some appropriate extra work. Some teachers have made appropriate plans for these pupils. However, this is not consistent across the school. Disadvantaged pupils continue to receive additional teaching from a dedicated teacher. Although teachers know who the disadvantaged pupils are, the role of teachers in supporting this vulnerable group is unclear. Consequently, provision for disadvantaged pupils is also too variable.

Investigative work is not yet a feature of mathematics teaching. This is because leaders have so far prioritised making improvements to the teaching of writing. Nevertheless, the mathematics leader has purchased new textbooks for key stage 1 and key stage 2. These provide greater opportunities for pupils to practise solving word problems and carry out some small investigations. However, in two mathematics lessons seen, teaching did not equip pupils well enough with the strategies to solve them.

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

Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. This is because the quality of teaching has risen and pupils are encountering more tasks that are more challenging and interesting. In some classes, pupils show considerable commitment to tasks even though they may not be clear what is expected of them. Most teachers have increased their expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers are more likely to wait for pupils to listen carefully before speaking now. Therefore, classrooms are more conducive to learning. Around the school, staff are taking greater steps to ensure that pupils are following the rules. For example, staff were heard reminding pupils to play outside rather than inside. Pupils are increasingly confident that adults address any misbehaviour.

Pupils' attendance continues to be above average. The proportion of pupils who are frequently off school has reduced since the autumn term so that hardly any pupils are persistently absent. Leaders work closely with parents to ensure that pupils attend school well and on time.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

Pupils' outcomes continue to vary. Across the school, variations in achievement still reflect the quality of teaching. In the Reception Year, children are achieving well. Those who started school with skills and abilities below those of their classmates have made good progress and are catching up. Pupils in Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6 are mostly making at least expected progress. As a result, attainment is rising in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, not enough pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are reaching the standards expected for their age in writing and

mathematics. In Year 4, despite recent increases, pupils' attainment is still too low in all subjects. The progress that pupils are making in Year 1 varies by subject. Most Year 1 pupils are making at least expected progress in reading and mathematics. However, not enough Year 1 pupils are making expected progress in writing. This means that they are not sustaining the good start to learning that they made in the Reception Year. In Year 3 and Year 5, pupils are not yet making enough progress in all subjects. Too few pupils are achieving the expected standards for their age, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Different groups of pupils are making similar progress to their classmates across the school. Rates of progress are linked to the variability in teaching. However, the attainment of different groups of pupils is uneven. The large majority of pupils identified as most able are exceeding the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Yet, few disadvantaged pupils are attaining well enough in any subject. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are not reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because these vulnerable pupils have only recently started to receive essential extra support, and this support is not yet consistent across the school.

Reading continues to be a relative strength. In the majority of classes, most pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age. Reading attainment in Year 6 has risen. However, not enough pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 are reaching the expected standards in reading. Attainment in writing and mathematics is still too low in Year 2 and key stage 2.

### **External support**

Buckinghamshire Learning Trust continues to provide significant support to leaders. As a result, the planned actions to improve the school are mostly on track. The trust is committed and provides additional resources wherever possible. For example, the adviser for the pupil premium is still working with the school to ensure that the recommendations for the provision for disadvantaged pupils are implemented. Leaders and governors value the support that the national support school, Chepping View, has provided to them to enable them to develop in their roles.