



2 November 2006

Mr S Hughes (Headteacher)  
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Dear Mr Hughes

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CASTLEWAY PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Tony Painter, Additional Inspector, to your school on 31 October and 1 November 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Focus of the visit and evidence gathered

Inspectors focused on the progress made in all the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2006. They observed lessons and looked at pupils' work in each class and also observed breaks, lunchtimes and assembly. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, several staff and pupils. Discussions also took place with the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA). A range of documents was also examined.

### Context

Since the school became subject to special measures in May 2006, one teacher has resigned and an experienced teacher has been appointed on a one-year contract to cover this position. A teacher who was previously part time has been given a full-time contract and an extra teaching assistant has also been appointed.

## Achievement and standards

The school's results in the Year 6 national tests in June 2006 did not improve significantly compared to those of 2005. Indeed, the overall levels of attainment for these pupils when they were in Year 2 were higher than those of the 2005 group, suggesting that achievement in Years 3 to 6 had fallen further. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics improved, narrowly missing the targets set by the school. However, the numbers of pupils reaching the nationally expected Level 4 remained low, substantially missing the school's targets, particularly in mathematics.

Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 2 in 2006 have dipped significantly from the average levels of past years. In particular, no pupils were judged to have reached the higher Level 3 in any assessed subject, which is well below the position found nationally. However, standards observed in lessons for these pupils were higher than the teacher assessment results suggest. The school recognises that more can be done to assure the accuracy of the recently introduced systems for tracking pupils' progress.

The current picture in the school is more positive. Improvements have been made in the quality of teaching and learning, which are starting to pay off. Consequently, pupils' learning and achievement are improving, although this has not yet had time to make an impact on standards. Teachers are identifying more clearly what pupils should learn and ensuring lessons are more stimulating. As a result, pupils were making at least satisfactory progress in all the lessons seen; it was good in some lessons. However, this overall satisfactory progress is not sufficient to redress the substantial legacy of underachievement within the school. More rapid and sustained progress is required to meet the school's challenging targets for pupils' attainment in 2007 and beyond.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2006:

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6 – inadequate progress.

## Personal development and well-being

The strengths identified at the time of the inspection in May 2006 have been maintained. Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to work. They also have strong relationships with each other and the adults who work with them. These factors have a positive impact on their learning.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is improving as the strategies introduced by the school, supported by the LA, begin to take effect. In particular, new

planning systems have now established a more consistent approach through the school. Plans make sound use of national guidance to ensure they are focused at the levels appropriate to the ages of pupils in the class. They place greater emphasis on identifying what pupils need to learn in their lessons and how this will be evaluated. This is supported by revised marking systems, again introducing greater consistency of approaches between classes. Teachers also encourage pupils to play a more effective part in evaluating their own work and are making lessons more interesting. Pupils are very positive about these improvements and feel that their teachers are increasingly making learning fun.

Throughout the school, teachers make good use of their strong relationships with pupils to establish clear organisation and routines. This approach ensures good behaviour in classes, although pupils sometimes lose attention when the pace of the lesson drops or they are less actively involved.

Teachers monitor pupils' progress through new assessment systems and most teachers are making appropriate use of this information to plan their lessons. However, systems are too new to give sufficiently accurate data for teachers to refine their planning to ensure it fully reflects the needs of all pupils. Tasks do not present children of different abilities with the best level of challenge. In addition, many pupils have fallen behind their expected levels and teachers have not yet planned ways for them to catch up. In many classrooms, teachers use clearly identified targets to help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. However, use of these is not yet consistent throughout the school. The curriculum and the care, guidance and support provided for pupils remain satisfactory, as at the last inspection.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2006:

- Ensure the quality of teaching, pace of learning and expectations of what children in Key Stage 2 can achieve are consistently good enough to enable children to perform their best – satisfactory progress.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management are appropriately focused on raising standards and improving teaching and learning. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created a climate in which staff are now working cohesively as a team to bring about improvement. Morale throughout the school is high. The leadership team is making good use of the support provided by the LA to introduce new systems for evaluating the school's performance. They have made great strides in some areas and now have a more accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate monitoring procedures have been put into place to ensure more frequent checks on planning and the quality of children's work and regular observations of lessons. These strategies are beginning to result in improved teaching at Key Stage 2. Subject coordinators are clear about their responsibilities and are taking a more active role.

However, monitoring is not yet robust enough to fully identify some important weaknesses in teaching, such as the need to match tasks more closely to children's abilities in order to provide the right level of challenge for them. Much of the work of setting up these new systems has been firmly led by the LA's officers, working with the school. The leadership team has not yet been proactive enough in developing its own systems and taking greater responsibility for checking on the progress they are making.

The management team, several staff and representatives from the LA have worked closely together to produce detailed plans to underpin the key elements of the school's work. Although these focus on the main areas for improvement, they do not always identify clearly enough how actions taken will improve pupils' standards and achievement. Timescales identified for evaluating progress are not always tight enough.

Governors are now taking a more active role in monitoring the work of the school and are providing challenge as well as support. They understand what needs to be done to bring about improvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2006:

- Improve the leadership and management of the school and develop a rigorous system of self-evaluation – satisfactory progress.

#### External support

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory. The timescale of July 2007, set for the school to emerge from special measures, is ambitious. The quality and impact of the external support provided by the LA are good. There is extensive, ongoing support provided by a team of specialist officers, effectively coordinated by the school's contact officer. This support is highly valued by the school; staff are particularly pleased with its breadth, depth and responsiveness. In addition, a former headteacher has been appointed to strengthen the governing body.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Quality of LA's statement of action – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure teachers make more effective use of assessment to plan lessons that provide the appropriate challenge for all pupils.

- Ensure senior managers are more proactive in developing and implementing robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for the Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Traves  
Additional Inspector