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Mrs J Hazzelby  
Headteacher  
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12 March 2007

Dear Mrs Hazzelby

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EAST WARD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Linda Murphy and Brenda McIntosh, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 6 and 7 March 2007, 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 September 2007.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

### Evidence

Inspectors scrutinised documents and observed the school's work, including lessons in each class, and talked to pupils about their learning and checked their work. They held discussions with key staff, two governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the school became subject to special measures the LA has funded an additional teacher to enable the large Year 6 group to be taught in two class groups. Two additional governors have also been appointed. Increasing numbers of pupils have joined and left: many of those who have joined have little or no English.

## Achievement and standards

There have been no significant improvements in pupils' overall standards since the inspection in September 2006. Standards in English, mathematics and science remain low and progress throughout the school is still too slow. The school's data shows that underachievement persists and is compounded as pupils move up through the school. Some pupils are up to two years below the expected levels for their age. In lessons, pupils do not yet learn at a fast enough pace to make up the large gaps in their learning. However, some of the small groups of pupils who receive additional support outside the classroom to boost their attainment make better progress than the others in their year group. In contrast, other pupils, especially those who have little or no English, do not have sufficient help with learning. Not all pupils capable of going beyond the nationally expected levels do so because they are not challenged well enough in their learning.

The school has given a stronger focus to raising standards and achievement in writing. The progress for most pupils is beginning to pick up but there are still too many pupils who do not have a basic grasp of spelling and punctuation. The focus on developing children's communication and language skills in the Foundation Stage is beginning to pay off and children in the Reception year are making better attempts at identifying letter sounds in words and writing lists and sentences using spellings which are phonetically plausible.

The school has a good amount of assessment information but this has not been used to highlight underachievement quickly enough to prevent pupils slipping further behind in their learning. Staff are being trained to track pupils' progress more closely to gain a better picture of how well individual pupils are doing and check whether they are on track to reach their potential. It is too soon to see improvements in standards and achievement from these actions.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006.

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science across the school – inadequate.

## Personal development and well-being

The school acted quickly on parental concerns about behaviour and implemented a revised policy. As a result, pupils' behaviour in and around the school has improved. Relationships in the school are secure. Pupils listen carefully to each other's points of view. Younger pupils approach their work with great enthusiasm and energy whilst the older pupils often lack the spark seen in the younger pupils. Attendance remains well below average and, although the school is working hard to improve this, it has yet to show any real impact.

## Quality of provision

The school overrates the quality of teaching, despite significant weaknesses in pupils' learning. Relationships between staff and pupils are secure and staff help the pupils' to behave sensibly so that there is an atmosphere conducive to learning. These advantages are not always optimised to combat pupils' passivity in lessons and to help them understand that they have to take on a more active responsibility for their learning. A start has been made to involve pupils in assessing how well they have done but this method is not used regularly in all classes. Class targets have been set in literacy and numeracy to promote the learning of pupils with different levels of ability. However, not all pupils know their targets and those that do often aim too low, because they do not understand the need to raise their achievement.

Teachers are clearer about the importance of a well presented classroom and some have worked hard to provide many additional materials to support the development of pupils' basic skills. Others initially missed the deadline set by senior staff and time was wasted. These extra resources are not used well enough to accelerate pupils' learning: for example, dictionaries are readily available but rarely used. Interactive whiteboards have yet to be used in a meaningful way to better engage pupils and help them close the gaps in their learning. Pupils are too reliant on direction from adults and too few checks are made on the impact of initiatives on pupils' learning.

Insufficient emphasis is placed on challenging those pupils who are capable of learning quickly. Too little is demanded of them because lesson planning does not ensure that activities are initially sharply matched to pupils' needs. Higher ability pupils are often expected to complete the same lower level work as the rest of the class before moving on to extra challenges: this slows their progress. The pace of lessons mostly lacks urgency. The slow rate at which pupils write and record their work is often allowed to determine the pace of the lesson. The deployment of teaching assistants to work alongside teachers is inconsistent and does not always improve the pace of learning.

The more successful and lively teaching, which is in the minority, is beginning to help pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning because the choice of activities engages their interests. For example, when pupils in Year 5 explored myths and legends and became engrossed in the story of Odysseus and the Cyclops, they spoke animatedly about how they could improve their writing.

The draft marking scheme is already improving marking in literacy, although some teachers do not yet make sure that pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do next.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006.

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching, focusing on what children are learning and their rate of progress – inadequate.

### Leadership and management

The leadership of the school has made an early start to address the issues identified for improvement in the inspection report. The headteacher has ensured that morale has remained positive. Staff recognise the need to make improvements and raise standards and achievement, but not all fully understand the urgency required. The headteacher is supported by the acting deputy headteacher and key stage coordinators. They provide positive teaching role models in school although their influence has been limited.

The school has directed its energy at improving the rate of progress of those pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in targeted groups. Senior staff have prioritised the improvement of communication and language skills so that pupils' writing and reading skills improve. Staff are receiving training in evaluating pupils' performance so that pupils are challenged at the right level to make better progress. These very recent initiatives have yet to bear fruit.

The headteacher has used the LA's support to produce detailed plans to guide the key areas identified for improvement. Success criteria are identified but are not sharp enough, nor do they have quantifiable outcomes. The action plan lacks clarity about funding and sometimes who precisely will be responsible for the actions. The speed at which these deficiencies are being addressed is too slow to ensure that the school has a tool to guide its monitoring and drive the needed improvements at an appropriate pace.

The governors are now taking a more active and critical role in monitoring the work of the school. The governing body has been strengthened by the addition of two experienced governors. Along with established governors they have set up a monitoring group, which has already challenged the pace of change. They are determined to bring about improvements at a faster rate of progress and to hold the school to account.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006.

- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, including the role of the governing body as a 'critical friend' – inadequate.

## External support

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory but has some weaknesses. It identifies the personnel responsible for carrying out each action and gives key dates and details of required resources. There is detailed coverage of the actions to be taken in the first three terms to raise standards and pupils' achievement. Overall, the plan meshes well with the school's raising achievement plan, which gives clear targets for pupils' progress and also for attainment at Level 4 in English and mathematics in 2007 and 2008. Nevertheless, there are no targets for attainment in science, or for attainment at Level 5 in any subject. While the plan provides a clear framework for action for the academic year 2006/7, it does not indicate the intended focus for the next three terms leading up to the expected removal of special measures in summer 2008. As such, it is not clear how the LA intends to steer the school to be increasingly self-sufficient in bringing about improvement.

An improvement officer has been attached to the school for some time and has seen the decline in standards. The LA is providing financial support to staffing and satisfactory support from a range of consultants, which is benefiting the school and the pupils.

## MAIN JUDGEMENTS

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Quality of the LA's statement of action – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the rate of attendance.
- Amend the action plan to ensure all staff have a clear role and monitoring is improved.

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

Yours sincerely

Judith Clarke  
Additional Inspector