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5 July 2007

Mrs A Palmer  
The Headteacher  
Gloucester Road Primary School  
Gloucester Road  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL51 8PB

Dear Mrs Palmer

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Gloucester Road Primary School

### Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 26 and 27 June with Fran Ashworth, Additional Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2005.

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.

### Evidence

We observed parts of lessons in all classes, observed lunchtimes and playtimes, scrutinised documents, and met with the associate headteacher and staff. In addition, discussions were held with pupils, the local authority adviser, and the chair of governors.

### Context

The headteacher was absent during the visit. A deputy headteacher was appointed since the last visit and will start in September. One teacher continues to be on long term absence and her class was taught by a temporary teacher.

## Achievement and standards

Children in the Foundation Stage continue to make satisfactory progress and there are signs that this is increasing due to better teaching. The improvements to class organisation are developing pupils' abilities more consistently, particularly their physical skills. The better equipped outside activity area is stretching their abilities and improving their motivation to learn.

In Years 1 and 2, the confident teaching seen at the last visit has been consolidated. Pupils' speaking skills are near to the levels expected, but a few pupils find it more difficult to talk or discuss at length. The school's own checks and current work indicate that number skills are improving at a satisfactory rate. In Years 3 to 6, standards remain below, but close to, those expected. The school has identified that pupils, particularly the higher attainers, do not achieve well enough in writing. Pupils' current work indicates that writing skills in other subjects are not always used sufficiently as some activities do not demand enough writing. Pupils make satisfactory gains in their mathematical skills and knowledge, but standards remain below the levels expected for their age. Pupils' range of spoken vocabulary, noted as weak in the last visit, is improving and many pupils express their opinions confidently and clearly.

Planning is generally more closely matched to pupils' needs due to the structures provided by an intensive support programme in mathematics but, in writing for example, some activities are too simple to extend their skills. In the Foundation Stage, independent activities, including using outside areas, are now planned more frequently and effectively.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- raise standards and improve achievement by making sure that learners of all ages are given work to do that meets their needs and capabilities – satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development has remained satisfactory. The improved behaviour at break and lunch times is reflected in pupils' good levels of cooperation and in sharing equipment willingly. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is not as consistently good, and varies depending on how well routines and expectations are established. Where the class has experienced several changes of teacher, pupils' behaviour is also not as good. Few pupils are late and, as pupils enjoy school, their attendance is good. Pupils work together in groups increasingly well as they move up the school and willingly listen to each other's ideas. The school council is slowly beginning to influence some decisions, such as organising events for charity, but it is still not making a significant impact through the school. Members are very quiet in meetings and too many are involved, which makes contributions less forthcoming. Pupils are generally positive about their school. They report that they feel safe and well looked after.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has some good features but is not consistent through the school as weaknesses still remain in the older age groups. In the Foundation Stage teachers now plan for a fuller range of indoor and outdoor activities. This helps pupils develop a broader range of skills and they enjoy their independent work. In the mixed Year 1 and 2 class, the confident teaching noted in the last visit has been maintained, resulting in pupils making good progress in their basic number and writing skills. In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching, whilst satisfactory, is too variable. For example, some activities do not stretch the higher attaining pupils sufficiently, particularly as some activities are pitched too low and do not demand enough of the pupils. Other activities lack pace and sparkle. An exception was seen in the Year 5/6 class, where pupils used their writing skills well when composing an imaginary job application to the NASA space programme. Marking is frequent and helpful in all classes and is supported by pupils having simple targets and self checks to guide their improvement.

The curriculum gives a secure framework for most subject areas and is enhanced by the inclusion of French. Mathematics and most areas of English are well planned and assessed. Other subjects are being reorganised into topics to make the curriculum more relevant. Teachers in Years 3 to 6 plan together well and the intensifying support programme ensures that basic skills are covered systematically. The information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum, although satisfactory, is also being revised and improved for September. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress as the curriculum is effectively simplified for them and is supported effectively by teaching assistants.

All the necessary safeguarding procedures are in place to ensure that care, support and guidance are satisfactory. Links with parents are being strengthened as a series of meetings is planned to enable parents to raise any concerns about school and their children's progress. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' progress. The checks in English and mathematics are updated monthly, but are summarised formally only twice during the year. This restricts the ability to see emerging trends and thus reduces the usefulness of the process.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- improve the quality of marking in Years 1 and 2 – good
- improve the quality and provision of accommodation and resources within the Foundation Stage – good.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher and governors have consolidated the routines and improvements noted in the last visit. Reviews by the local authority (LA) confirm that monitoring procedures are closely connected to priorities in the school improvement plan.

Checks on teaching are regular and accurate. The improvements identified are taking time in leading to a more consistent pattern of good teaching. This is partly due to the high number of part-time and temporary teachers currently in Years 3 to 6. Subject coordination has been reviewed and staff have received training. Subject responsibilities have been redistributed because of the appointment of the new deputy headteacher but, as he does not take up post until next term, subject coordination is not yet currently effective. The headteacher is beginning to use the emerging evidence about pupils' progress, their personal development, and the quality of provision to inform school self-evaluation. This information is guiding priorities for next year, including improving pupils' writing skills.

Governors continue to give the school good support. Their monitoring routines are now firmly established and their committee structures and monitoring are closely aligned with the priorities in the school development plan. There are vacancies for parent governors, despite efforts to fill them. The governors are investigating ways of appointing new governors other than from the parental body. They are increasingly challenging the school to move forward as their monitoring identifies where actions have been less effective.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- rectify the weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school – good
- improve the rigour and robustness of the self-evaluation and monitoring process – good.

### External support

The local authority has carried out another short review since the last visit. It highlighted accurately some inconsistency in teaching, some ways to improve pupils' personal development, and the need to raise standards in writing. There continues to be good support generally through the intensifying support programme, as well as support for individual teachers. This is leading to pupils making better progress, following improvements in teaching, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2. An associate headteacher has given the school good support. He is helping to arrange end-of-term meetings with parents to help foster and develop relationships with them, particularly during the temporary absence of the headteacher.

### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Improve pupils' writing skills in Years 3 to 6 so they write confidently and accurately in a range of subjects.
- Improve the teaching in Years 3 to 6 to a consistently good quality so that all pupils, but particularly the highest attainers, make good progress.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Hodge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kevin Hodge  
Additional Inspector