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16 May 2007

Mr Mark Millar  
Associate Headteacher  
Seven Stars Primary School  
Peacock Hall Road  
Leyland  
Lancashire  
PR25 1TD

Dear Mr Millar

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Seven Stars Primary School

### Introduction

Following my visit with Andrew Bennett, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 May 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 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.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the associate head teacher, members of staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. Fourteen parts of lessons and an assembly were observed.

### Context

The substantive headteacher resigned from April and the deputy headteacher has resigned with effect from the end of the current academic year. A new associate headteacher has been in place since March. The previous associate headteacher returned to her school at the request of its governing body, but continues to work with the school as a consultant for a day each week. An attempt to appoint a substantive headteacher in April was unsuccessful. An assistant headteacher has

been seconded to the school from the second half of the summer term for the coming academic year. Interviews for a teacher with a responsibility allowance are to be held shortly. The leadership of the school during the autumn term has yet to be finalised.

### Achievement and standards

A detailed review of the attainment and progress of pupils in the previous academic year was provided in the last monitoring letter. An analysis of the performance in the national tests and assessments in 2007 will be made during the next monitoring visit. On the basis of observations, standards overall remain well below average. The standards in the Foundation stage and Key Stage 1 are close to national expectations, but those in Key Stage 2 remain well below average. Standards in Key Stage 2 vary between the subjects, with standards in writing being significantly lower than those in reading. Standards also vary between year groups, with standards in Year 6 being particularly low. In lessons observed, progress was satisfactory or better, but overall progress is inconsistent and the school's assessment data confirm that there remains significant underachievement.

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

- Improve standards in English – inadequate progress

### Personal development and well-being

The personal development and well-being of pupils are satisfactory. The majority of pupils attend school regularly and are punctual. Pupils behave well in and around school and there have been no exclusions since the previous monitoring visit. Their social skills are well developed. They co-operate in classroom activities and play together harmoniously at break times. Pupils make good use of the designated areas in the school grounds for active play and for sitting quietly, and older pupils help younger pupils to play together. Pupils are polite and eager to discuss their work with visitors.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall. Where teaching lacks pace or teachers prolong activities, pupils are passive and can lose concentration, but in the most effective lessons pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve; it remains satisfactory overall. While no inadequate lessons were seen, and the proportion of good teaching has increased since the previous monitoring inspection, there is still insufficient teaching that is lively and inspiring enough to make a swift impact on improving the quality of pupils' learning and thus raise standards of attainment. There is a greater focus on pitching tasks at appropriate levels to meet the differing abilities of pupils in some lessons but

this is not fully embedded. The distribution of better teaching is uneven, with more in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2, where the effects of staff changes have hindered progress in developing a shared approach to teaching and learning. More changes in staffing in Key Stage 2 are anticipated in September 2007; if rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are to be quickly achieved, much will rest on the consistent implementation of new policies for teaching and learning and marking that were recently approved by governors.

The most successful lessons are those in which pupils are given activities that sustain their interest and encourage them to reflect on their learning. When asked to work in pairs or groups, pupils develop confidence in expressing ideas and willingly take responsibility for independent learning. A lack of challenge is the most common weakness in lessons that are merely adequate; when there is too little for pupils to do independently, and when they are not kept busy by a sequence of interesting tasks, learning becomes dutiful rather than exciting and progress is not fast enough to improve standards significantly. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by adults in classrooms and are included sensitively in activities by other pupils so that their progress is equivalent to that made by their peers.

Inconsistencies in marking noted previously are still evident. Most teachers take considerable trouble to write comments on pupils' work but too often these merely describe what has been achieved, or not. There is seldom a clear explanation of what steps pupils need to take either to consolidate their attainment or to move to the next level. Targets, and pupils' awareness of them, are an increasing feature of lessons but without consistent diagnostic marking it will be difficult for pupils to achieve them.

Because of recent disruptions in staffing, the curriculum experienced by pupils has not been sufficiently broad and balanced in all year groups. This situation has been recognised and an audit conducted. A revised curriculum map is intended to ensure equality of access for all pupils in the near future. Extra-curricular activities and enhancements to the day-to-day curriculum continue to be popular and make an effective contribution to broadening many pupils' experiences and aspirations. At the time of this monitoring inspection, Year 3 pupils were enjoying a sequence of visits to a nearby facility where they learn a range of skills in an outdoor environment, while Year 6 pupils are receiving sports coaching from the staff of a local professional rugby club.

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

- Raise pupils' achievement by improving teaching and learning through the sharing of good practice and the elimination of unsatisfactory teaching – satisfactory progress

## Leadership and management

The action plan for the summer term has been revised and continues to drive improvement. A regular newsletter is produced to keep parents well informed of developments in the school and to celebrate the achievements of pupils. The unforeseen change of the associate headteacher during the last term and the uncertainty over the future leadership of the school have limited the embedding of procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision. However, the current associate headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. There is a detailed calendar for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, planning and pupils' progress for the summer term, but an annual schedule of monitoring has not been established to support the self-evaluation of the school. There has been a reduction in the frequency of formal monitoring of lessons by the senior management team and this means that there has been little progress in sharing the best practice since it is not routinely identified through observation and detailed feedback. There are plans to address this and a timetable has been set to involve the core subject leaders in the process.

Efforts to improve the quality of teaching have continued successfully through a well co-ordinated programme of training and support, but plans for peer coaching have not been fully implemented. There is now an established system to track pupils' attainment and progress and a detailed analysis has been undertaken to identify underachievement. This has resulted in an intensive programme of intervention to support those pupils who are underachieving. The new associate headteacher has also acted to improve the support for the most vulnerable pupils by establishing a pastoral support team to address barriers to learning.

The role of the governing body in holding the school to account remains underdeveloped and this is an important area to be addressed urgently. The governors are to undertake an audit of their strengths and the effectiveness of their processes. This should allow them to identify their development needs and to build on the training they have received in the use of performance data.

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

- Strengthen management and monitoring systems to ensure that initiatives are embedded in practice – satisfactory progress

## External support

The local authority has continued to provide valued support to the school. The adviser from the monitoring and intervention team and the consultant headteacher have supported the monitoring of the progress of the school in improving teaching and raising attainment. The support of primary strategy consultants is carefully co-ordinated and its impact is evaluated regularly. It is valued by the school and has brought about improvements in the confidence of the staff in planning, assessment

and in the use of subject targets for each year group. This is beginning to improve the quality of teaching, but it is not consistently embedded in all classes. A programme of training and support for the governors has commenced, but has yet to ensure that the governing body is an effective part of the self-evaluation process. There are appropriate plans to address this issue.

## Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

## Priorities for further improvement

- Extend the use of curricular targets and develop the use of individual pupil targets to ensure that each pupil knows what they have to do to make progress.
- Further improve the quality of teaching through peer coaching and disseminating the best practice already within the school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education Standards and Inclusion at Lancashire County Council.

Yours sincerely

Garry Jones  
H M Inspector