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[ Post-visit letter – special measures visits ]  
6 July 2007

Mrs Maddie Oldershaw  
The Headteacher  
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Pear Tree Street  
Derby  
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Dear Mrs Oldershaw

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PEAR TREE JUNIOR SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Christopher Deane-Hall, Additional Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 July 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 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, a sample of pupils work in every year, and met with the headteacher; the senior management team (SMT); the subject teams for English and mathematics; the chair of governors; a group of pupils in Year 5 and representatives of the local authority (LA).

### Context

The local authority (LA) has seconded an experienced and successful headteacher as executive headteacher to work with the school for two days a week. There has been a reduction in staff absence, which has brought greater stability to the school, although two classes were still being taught by temporary teachers at the time of the visit. The school has a full complement of permanent staff for next term and has been able to appoint an experienced English subject leader to support important areas of development. The turnover of pupils continues an impact on the school, particularly the proportion of pupils who join with little English.

### Achievement and standards

The most recent National Curriculum test results are higher than in 2005, particularly in mathematics, where the school's intervention strategies have had the most impact. While standards in English and, particularly, in science remain exceptionally low, in mathematics standards are only below average. These results represent satisfactory progress from the test results in Year 2 in 2003. While the majority of pupils now reach the expected level, the proportion reaching the higher level is still low and there is a significant minority who do not reach Level 3. Presentation of pupils' work has improved and most now take good care of their books. Nevertheless, attainment and achievement are still rather inconsistent through the school, particularly in English. The school's tracking system demonstrates that standards are being maintained in mathematics in most year groups. However, standards in English, particularly in writing, while in part a consequence of the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English, are exceptionally low in some years.

The school has begun to develop strategies for improving the quality of writing, and to increase the amount of writing in other subjects. It is too early to see any significant impact of this, although pupils are writing in a greater range of genres than previously. The school is committed to further development through the curriculum in the new term. Attainment and progress in science continue to lag behind other core subjects, because it has not been regarded as such a significant issue as mathematics and English. The school has, rightly, also focused on improving the creative curriculum and there are some very good examples of pupils' art and design work around the school, in which they take considerable pride.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006;

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by improving the quality and consistency of teaching and ensuring that all pupils are appropriately challenged; satisfactory progress.

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development continues to be satisfactory, though there are some stronger features. These include pupils' ability to take the right decisions to begin to support their own learning. Many are far more aware of what they need to do to improve their work, though this is still variable. Behaviour is satisfactory around the school and in lessons. Where teaching is good and pupils are engrossed in their work, behaviour is often good. Attendance is satisfactory. Although it is still below the national average, the school works extremely closely with the community to underline the importance of regular and timely attendance.

There is a significant number of pupils who join during their school career. Many of these do not have English as their first language. They are rapidly immersed in the school community, taking a full part in school life. Pupils feel safe at school. One summed it up well, 'It makes me feel safe that I have friends.' Pupils are increasingly aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how this can be achieved. Where teaching and learning opportunities match their needs there is clear enjoyment of learning and pupils are increasingly confident about how their targets for learning help them to improve their work. The new playground markings for games have made a positive contribution to pupils' learning environment.

## Quality of provision

With the considerable support provided by the LA and the executive headteacher, there has been better progress in the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is good. Less unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the visit and it is evident from the school's tracking systems that there is better progress in most classes. Teachers are enthusiastic about the new interactive whiteboards and many are beginning to use them as an interesting resource to motivate and involve the pupils. This is at a relatively early stage, particularly in enabling the pupils to use the technology. The school has planned appropriate training to develop teachers' expertise.

The quality of display has improved considerably and most classrooms are now interesting and stimulating places for pupils, which celebrate their achievement and encourage them to greater effort. The best teaching

demonstrates good subject knowledge and use of resources. There are high expectations and a range of effective teaching techniques, including accurate differentiation. However, the setting of different levels of work to match the needs of the range of pupils in the class remains a general weakness. Consequently, tasks are sometimes too complex for the majority, or do not move the more able on rapidly enough. When the teaching is strongest, the lessons are pacy and the pupils are beginning to make rapid progress. For example, in one year group the average set is starting to overtake the more able in mathematics because of the different rates of progress. Lack of pace remains a shortcoming in many otherwise satisfactory lessons.

Teachers have developed the use of targets and these are now far more precise and supportive for both pupils and staff. The wording is easily understood by pupils and helps them to know what they need to do to move to the next level. In one class, the teacher was observed developing the pupils' understanding of the use of criteria to support pupils in knowing whether the lesson objectives and their targets were being achieved. While these practices are recent developments, they have good potential to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The school is not using the good teaching it has well enough to develop the skills of others, although there have been some visits to other schools to see good practice. The quality of marking is still inconsistent; in some classes it is analytical and helps pupils to understand how well they have done. The use of 'objective achieved' stamps in pupils' books is a positive step but is no substitute for more rigorous comments.

The curriculum was unsatisfactory when the school was last visited, because it was unable to deliver the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum through a lack of resources. The LA has moved rapidly to rectify the situation, and every classroom now has an interactive whiteboard. There are two sets of laptop computers, which staff are beginning to use, but this remains at a very early stage and these were only seen in use in one lesson during the visit. ICT is not timetabled in most classes and therefore it is not apparent how rapidly pupils will be able to make up for lost time. Consequently, the curriculum overall is barely adequate.

The dance and drama studio is still underused and empty for most of the day, although there was one instance of it being used for a lesson on this occasion. The school has stopped setting for English lessons, a positive move that enables class teachers to have a more accurate understanding of their pupils' attainment and areas for development. Teachers have begun to teach guided reading in discrete sessions each day. This takes up a significant

amount of time and there will need to be close monitoring and rigorous evaluation of its impact to judge whether this use of time is effective in raising standards. The teaching of French to all Year 3, and next term also to Year 4, is not helpful to the pupils whose first language is not English, particularly those who are at an early stage of learning the language. The priority for the school is to ensure that these pupils, most of whom already speak a modern foreign language fluently, to make rapid progress in acquiring fluency in English.

The school has sharpened up the start of the school day so that lessons begin briskly and on time, but will need to bring the same rigour to the start of the afternoon session to ensure that time is used efficiently. Timetables demonstrate that staff in some year groups work together effectively to ensure that pupils have a consistently similar experience through all subjects but this is still inconsistent. The better organisation of teachers' planning time next term means that there is the opportunity to ensure more closely aligned programmes for each year group.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and ensure that all pupils are appropriately challenged – satisfactory progress

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are still inadequate. However, they have improved satisfactorily since the last monitoring visit. The introduction of an experienced executive headteacher for two days a week as part of the LA's support plan has injected much needed urgency into the school's improvement. In addition, the support being given has begun to provide the leadership team with the confidence to make the right decisions to bring about improvements. It is vital that this sense of urgency is increased so that there is much more rapid progress in order to have special measures removed within two years. The senior leadership team has carved out a more clearly defined role so that the main areas for improvement are centre stage. By recognising the main priorities for improvement and how these can be achieved, the leadership has been more effective in planning and implementing the necessary strategies to improve pupils' learning and achievement and to raise standards.

A satisfactory three-year strategic development plan has been completed which shows the right areas for improvement over time. Staff are more aware of the school's situation and involved in following the new systems and procedures which are beginning to underpin improvement. The development of the middle management in the form of the English and mathematics curriculum teams has been a positive move. These teams have made decisions which have improved the way that learning is planned. For example, the recently agreed 'non negotiable' planning of aspects of numeracy have provided teachers with clear guidance on when skills will be taught to build on pupils' prior learning. Teachers' planning is not always rigorous or sufficiently detailed. The role of these teams is still fairly narrow. They are beginning to analyse how teachers plan for their lessons by analysing pupils' work, but are not yet clear about how to check that agreed procedures are being carried out by staff. Leadership teams are not in place to lead the development of science and ICT.

The school has improved the use of ICT and, with changes in staff next term, the ICT curriculum will be led by an experienced leader. The setting up these teams has allowed the senior leadership team to improve the school's self-evaluation processes, analyse information and to move the school forward. In addition, the support of the executive headteacher has allowed them to begin to develop their own leadership and management skills. This support is still needed to sustain the recent improvements. Although the school has a fairly accurate view of the quality of teaching, more still needs to be done to ensure that, where weaknesses in teaching occur, the necessary training and support is set in place and its impact subsequently checked.

There is now urgency to the pace of improvement; more staff are involved in the push to improve achievement and standards, which is beginning to bear fruit. The results of the national tests in Year 6 show that in all three core subjects, standards are rising. A vital part of this improvement has been the secure system for tracking pupils' progress. The school is now clear about how each pupil is doing. Where progress falters, pupils are targeted for additional support until things improve. The success of this system can be seen by the number of pupils who are identified for support and who are subsequently able to leave the target group because their progress has improved.

The executive headteacher has a very good understanding of different types of data and how they can be used to improve the rate of pupils' progress. However, this is not yet embedded in the leadership and management of the school or the strategies used by subject coordinators. The strong leadership of the chair of the governing body is ensuring that governors are clearer

about that the effectiveness of the school's systems for self-evaluation. Governors are becoming far more involved in monitoring the work of the school and in holding it to account.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection of March 2006:

- Secure the school's management structure and staff roles and responsibilities to provide a strong direction for the improvement at all levels – satisfactory progress.
- Ensure that the quality of self-evaluation is rigorous, inclusive of staff, governors, parents and pupils and is embedded in the school's work – satisfactory progress.

#### External support

The support provided by the LA by has improved considerably and has been good since the last visit. The appointment of the executive headteacher has proved to be a significant step forward, particularly in developing leadership and management. The installation of the ICT equipment is another positive step. The LA has rewritten its plan of action, which takes more account of the school's views and has a more realistic timescale for removal of special measures.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since the previous monitoring visit – satisfactory

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to develop distinct leadership roles through the school, maintaining and developing the involvement of all staff, particularly through the development of science and ICT.
- Further develop the understanding, at all levels, of different forms of data and the use that is made of it, to support the achievement of all pupils and the effectiveness of leadership and management.

- Ensure that all staff conform to the school's policies and procedures and that planning is rigorous and detailed in all year groups.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Cox  
Additional Inspector