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3 October 2007

Mr L Stevens  
Acting Headteacher  
West Earlham Junior School  
Scarnell Road  
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NR5 8HT

Dear Mr Stevens

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WEST EARLHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Meg Hackney, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 – 2 October 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 March 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – *satisfactory*

Newly qualified teachers *may not be appointed*

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

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

Yours sincerely

Godfrey V Bancroft

Godfrey Bancroft  
Additional Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF WEST EARLHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 1 – 2 October 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed 12 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, teachers, groups of pupils, parents and carers, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the Local Authority (LA).

### Context

The school, through LA reorganisation, has changed its status from a middle school (Years 4 to 7) to a junior school (Years 3 to 6). At the end of the Summer term 2007 pupils in Years 6 and 7 left and in the Autumn term, Year 3 pupils were admitted for the first time. Following the inspection in March 2007, and the judgement placing the school in special measures, a member of the County Headteacher Service was appointed as acting headteacher, to lead the school. A new chair of the governing body was also appointed along with governors.

### Achievement and standards

Progress in lessons and in pupils' achievement over time is improving. The most recent national tests, taken in 2007 by pupils at the end of Year 6, show a clear improvement in standards in English and mathematics compared to previous years. Overall, standards in 2007 were well below average, but having previously been very low. However, standards in science dropped slightly. The school has set challenging targets for the attainment of the current Year 6. These targets are underpinned by rigorous and accurate assessment by teachers and are scrutinised closely by senior managers. The targets and the work in pupils' books indicate that standards in English and mathematics are currently set to improve again. This improvement in standards is a result of the good progress in lessons now being made by many pupils. However, the poor communication skills and low speaking and listening abilities of many pupils remain a barrier to faster progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2007:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science. - *good*

### Personal development and well-being

Teachers' skills in applying appropriate strategies to manage pupils' behaviour have resulted in a much calmer and productive learning environment. Most pupils now move around the school quietly and behave well in the dining room. The quality of behaviour in the playground has improved and there are fewer instances of bullying, although a few pupils report that they do not always feel safe and well supported by staff. The recently introduced positive behaviour policy has brought about a more

consistent approach towards encouraging and celebrating good behaviour, hard work and achievement. The well organised nurture and quiet withdrawal rooms are having a very positive effect on the behaviour and self-esteem of a number of potentially vulnerable pupils. This is helping to reduce the number of short and long term exclusions. During lessons many pupils are still overly reliant on their teachers and on teaching assistants to keep them focussed on their work and they are not sufficiently independent.

Attendance remains below average but is improving steadily. There is now a much stronger emphasis on improving pupils' punctuality and attendance with a broad range of rigorous monitoring strategies firmly in place. These include a good and encouraging reward system for pupils and regular attendance information for parents and carers.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2007:

- Develop a wider range of more rigorous strategies to encourage better attendance - *satisfactory*

#### Quality of provision

Teachers now have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and how well they will behave. Most lesson planning clearly shows how the needs of the full range of abilities in each class will be met. In a minority of lessons this is not always evident in practice and pupils of widely differing abilities sometimes find themselves doing the same task. At such times the work is too hard for some and too easy for others. The ways in which teachers explain to pupils what they expect them to learn during lessons is improving. However, there are still times when pupils are not clear about what they should do and learn. There are also times when they are not involved sufficiently in identifying what they need to do to make their work even better.

Teachers are becoming better at managing pupils' behaviour so that more effective learning takes place. Systems to promote positive behaviour have been introduced and are being applied with increasing consistency by staff. Consequently, pupils respond positively for much of the time and incidents of unacceptable behaviour are far less prevalent than at the time of the inspection. However, there are still times when such incidents occur and pupils do not apply themselves well enough to their learning. This happens in the small number of lessons where teaching remains inadequate and, as a result, the pace of pupils' progress diminishes.

The deputy-headteacher has led the introduction of significant changes to the curriculum, designed to ensure that it is better matched to pupils' learning needs. Some of these changes are at an early stage in their development. Even so, increasingly meaningful links between subjects are evident. Teachers are now able to be more flexible in the time they allocate and the approach they take to teaching a subject or topic. This means that work is matched more closely to pupils' preferred styles of learning and to the stage they have reached. Greater use is also being

made of the locality and of visits to places further away to make learning more interesting.

Procedures for checking pupils' personal development are being applied by staff with greater rigour and are becoming increasingly effective. The school, guided by LA consultants, has adopted the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme which is gradually becoming part of pupils' daily learning experience. Links with other support agencies to help pupils to overcome social and emotional challenges are developing well. Parents and carers views of the views of the school are also becoming more positive with an increasing number coming in to help and visiting the school's community room.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2007:

- Improve teachers' skills in managing pupils' behaviour so that more effective learning can take place. - *satisfactory*

### Leadership and management

The acting headteacher is providing strong leadership and is working closely with the LA, deputy headteacher and staff to bring about improvement. Together they are working effectively to promote and maintain good staff morale. They have also introduced procedures to ensure that the school has an accurate picture of the quality of education it provides. A thoughtful and thorough development plan sets out clearly how the issues facing the school will be addressed. This has resulted in the introduction of a series of measures to bring the much needed improvements about. One key initiative is to ensure that all teachers have the guidance they need to use the data gained from assessments to plan the next stages of pupils' learning and to accurately measure the progress that pupils are making. These measures, introduced in partnership with LA consultants, are resulting in improved progress and in higher standards, especially in English and mathematics. Even so, more time is needed for the procedures to become fully embedded and for all teachers to be confident in their use. Certainly better use is being made of the data gathered through monitoring and assessment activities to improve the provision and to set challenging targets for pupils. Significant improvements have also been made to the learning environment including the development of the library and relocation of the playground.

The newly appointed chair and other members of the governing body are very supportive of all aspects of the school's work. They recognise that governors are not playing a sufficiently proactive part in evaluating the quality of education or in considering how it might be improved. With this in mind, training is planned to ensure that governors become well placed to check on and evaluate the quality of education.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2007:

- Ensure that the school's leadership make better use of all the available data from monitoring and assessments to improve the provision and to set challenging targets for pupils. – *satisfactory*

### External support

The LA's statement of action sets out clearly the actions that need to be taken over realistic, but challenging, timescales and how their success will be evaluated. Following the inspection the LA brought together a Project Board to co-ordinate the support and training to be provided by advisers and consultants. Significant support has been provided for developments in English and mathematics and for the introduction of the SEAL project. Whilst some of the measures introduced have not had sufficient time to become fully embedded in the work of the school they have laid the foundation on which future improvements can be based.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Following training, establish procedures through which the governing body can check on and evaluate the quality of provision.