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12 December 2007

Ms Tamsin Dyer
The Acting Headteacher
Mousehole Community Primary School
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Cornwall
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Dear Ms Dyer

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MOUSEHOLE
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 November 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 June 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. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

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 Cornwall.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF MOUSEHOLE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 21 and 22 November 2007

Evidence

I observed lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, governors, teachers and a representative from the local authority (LA). I also held discussions with pupils and observed a meeting of the school council.

Context

Since the school was made subject to special measures, the substantive headteacher has resigned and the acting headteacher joined the school in September 2007. The school has reduced the number of classes from four to three. One teacher has left the school and not been replaced and two additional teaching assistants have been appointed.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Children enter the school with standards which are slightly below those normally found and make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. By the end of Year 2 pupils achieve results which are in line with, or slightly above, the national average. Fewer pupils achieve higher levels in writing than the national average and the school has identified this as an area for improvement.

By the end of Year 6 pupils achieve higher results than found nationally, with particularly high achievement in English. The year group is often quite small and results vary each year due to small changes in the performance of a few pupils. Also, some of the school's past assessment information is unreliable. However, given their results at the end of Year 2, progress is at least as expected. The school has introduced more thorough arrangements for the assessment and recording of pupils' achievement which should provide a more accurate picture of future progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils display positive attitudes and their behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. They are polite and friendly and enjoy coming to school. They are pleased to talk about their work and feel that the school's improved arrangements for assessment and monitoring are helping them to make better progress. Attendance is close to the national average. Whilst there is no unauthorised absence, authorised absence is higher than average.

Pupils have a good understanding of the need to eat healthy food and take exercise. This is reinforced through the high quality of food provided by the school at dinner time and the healthy snacks and fruit available in the school tuck shop. Pupils take

regular exercise in physical education lessons and when they participate in inter school sports events.

Pupils learn to take responsibility when they run the playground 'buddy bus stop', serve on the school council, or act as monitors looking after equipment. Their achievements and successes are celebrated when pupils receive awards in weekly assemblies to which their parents are invited. Pupils take part in local festivals which celebrate Cornwall's heritage. They have improved their knowledge of other cultures and have a satisfactory awareness of different religious festivals. This is promoted successfully in religious education lessons and when they study life in other countries, for example in projects on Africa or Fair Trade.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is a harmonious and purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Classrooms have interesting and lively displays which effectively support learning. Teachers use praise and encouragement well to help pupils try their best. The school has introduced a good system for setting targets and assessing regularly pupils' progress which is helping to raise standards. Teachers and pupils know more accurately the level at which they are working and what needs to be done to improve. Standards in writing are assessed each half term and in reading and mathematics they are assessed termly. Teachers have established a reliable starting point for each pupil and are using this information to set appropriate work for the different abilities in lessons, although sometimes the more capable pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their own ideas and work independently. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and are adept at using questioning to check pupils' understanding. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their own and each other's work are sometimes limited.

Teachers have worked hard to reorganise the curriculum and much has been achieved since the start of the present academic year. A four year rolling programme of topics has been introduced from Year 3 to Year 6 which ensures pupils in mixed age classes study different topics as they move up the school. Since the reduction in the number of classes from four to three, staff have assumed responsibility for planning for a new class which includes groups from the Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2. The school is using focused support from the LA to establish planning for this class. A good start has been made and current arrangements are satisfactory. Further work is taking place to strike the right balance between organising groups around age and/or ability. The curriculum is extended by a good range of visits to local places of interest, such as the Eden Project and the Falmouth Film Festival. After school clubs are popular and are often organised and run by parents. Local artists also visit the school to work on various projects.

The school has improved its systems for guiding and supporting students in their work. Books are marked regularly with helpful suggestions for improvement. Staff discuss progress regularly with pupils and, as a result, they are aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally included in the life of the school. Teachers are aware of their needs and adapt work accordingly. Those with a statement of special educational needs receive appropriate individual support in school and additional

advice from visiting professionals. Some policies relating to the health and safety of pupils are currently being considered by the school and have yet to be finalised.

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

- improve systems for assessing pupils' progress and ensure that teachers use the information gained to plan for the range of different abilities and ages in their classes – good
- improve curricular planning to ensure that pupils' skills are developed systematically as they move through the school, and pupils know what they will be doing each day – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have improved significantly. The acting headteacher provides a clear focus on tackling areas identified for improvement by the last inspection and has successfully engaged staff in working more closely as a team. Consequently, several changes have been introduced in a relatively short period of time which are already raising the school's performance. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and areas for improvement discussed. Staff have worked together to improve the quality of assessment information and it now shows more accurately how well pupils are achieving. Curricular planning has improved and sets out clearly which topics are taught in each year whilst ensuring there is appropriate coverage of each subject. The school also receives strong support from parents and the local community.

The school is building a clearer picture of its strengths and areas for development and its capacity for further improvement is becoming more secure. Systems for collecting data have been established which are being used effectively to show the progress of different groups of pupils and to identify individuals who are falling behind. There are suitable plans in place to help raise standards which are reviewed regularly. It is intended that curricular leaders will take on new responsibilities for improving teaching and planning in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science from the beginning of the spring term. They have not yet had their responsibilities set out in detail and the relevant professional development and support are not fully in place. The status of the school's leadership has only been clarified recently following the resignation of the substantive headteacher. The acting headteacher has made a commitment to remain at the school until the end of the academic year and provide much needed continuity in leadership. The LA is taking steps to enable the governing body to make a permanent appointment to the position of headteacher. Following the last inspection, changes in membership of the governing body weakened its ability to provide support and challenge to the school. The governing body has recently attracted new members and it is now in a better position to help the school move forward. Several governors have benefitted from training to help define more clearly their roles and responsibilities. A committee structure to oversee areas of the school's performance has been established and several governors have visited the school and reported on aspects of its work. These arrangements have not yet been in place long enough to have a significant impact on the school's work.

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

- improve monitoring so the school has a better understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement – satisfactory
- develop the governing body to ensure that governors fulfil their roles effectively – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority provides good support for the school which focuses on the key areas for improvement. It has secured the secondment from another school of an acting headteacher and introduced an experienced chair of governors to strengthen the work of the governing body. Various advisers and consultants have offered support to teachers and provided training for the governing body. The LA statement of action is satisfactory and it is linked to the school's own action plan which contains success criteria in each area for improvement, although in some cases these lack measurable outcomes.

Priorities for further improvement

- Clarify the new responsibilities of curricular leaders and provide the support necessary to help them fulfil their roles successfully.
- Ensure suitable arrangements are in place for filling the vacant post of headteacher.