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Mrs Paula Bailey  
Blaydon West Primary School  
Blaydon Bank  
Blaydon-on-Tyne  
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NE21 4PY

Dear Mrs Bailey

### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BLAYDON WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Ann Wallis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 March 2008, 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 October 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures is 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 Education for Gateshead LA.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Shepherd  
Additional Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BLAYDON WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 March 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including observations of lessons of every teacher, a school assembly and pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and playtimes. Inspectors scrutinised documents, samples of pupils' work from each class and analysed school data. They held discussions with the headteacher, the interim executive board (IEB), an adviser from the Local Authority (LA), the mathematics coordinator, the Reception teacher and the associate assistant headteacher.

### Context

Since the school was placed in special measures the deputy headteacher has resigned from her post and the school is currently in the process of appointing a new one. The LA has received permission from the Secretary of State to replace the governing body with an IEB. This board has been in place since the beginning of the spring term. It consists of four members and has been meeting at least once a week. The LA has been working closely with the IEB to support them in the technical aspects of their role.

### Achievement and standards

There have been no national tests since the school was put into special measures. The school's data show that standards in Year 6 remain very low with many pupils working below the expected levels. Standards are lowest in writing and mathematics, with half the pupils working below the expected level for their age. The proportion of pupils working at the higher levels in Year 6 is much smaller than average with reading standards better than writing and mathematics. The same weaknesses are evident in Year 2 with more pupils working below the expected level. Again standards in reading are better than writing and mathematics. Too few pupils are achieving the higher levels in this age group. There is clear evidence of rising standards in Reception, particularly in writing where standards are higher than expected for their age. This is due to the increased emphasis on children learning sounds and letters, the organisation of children to write in small groups with focused support from the teacher and increased opportunities for children to write during independent activities.

The school has worked hard to implement more rigorous assessment systems to identify pupils' standards on a termly basis to track individual pupils' progress and to identify underachievement. These systems are at a very early stage of development. The data show that progress and achievement are uneven through the school. This is due to differences in the quality of teaching and learning. The scrutiny of pupils' work confirms this uneven progress. A more positive outcome of this scrutiny is the increased rate of progress in pupils' written work this term as a result of the strategies that have been put in place to raise standards. An example of one of these strategies is the improvement in teachers' marking, which is now supporting pupils in

understanding what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. The progress of more able pupils and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inconsistent in different classes and different subjects.

### Personal development and well-being

As at the time of the previous inspection pupils behaviour is satisfactory overall. In classes where staffing has been stable, pupils have developed good attitudes to learning and behave well. Where classes have had changes of teacher and routines are less well established, pupils take longer to settle to a task and their pace of learning is slower. The school rewards pupils for good attendance, monitors their absences carefully and communicates well with parents. However, despite all of these efforts, attendance remains below average. Pupils continue to have a good awareness of healthy eating and the school has now achieved the Healthy School's Award. Pupils know how to stay safe and are keen to take responsibility within the school community as peer mentors and playground buddies. More lesson time is now used to develop pupils' basic skills of literacy and numeracy and these are beginning to show the first signs of improvement, especially in numeracy in Year 6. Pupils ICT skills remain an area for future development.

### Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are improving. The headteacher, the IEB, LA specialists and National Leaders of Education have all worked very hard to identify key strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. They have provided very well focused staff development in order to increase teachers' levels of expertise. A key focus for improvement has been the issues of putting more effective assessment systems in place and supporting staff in using them more effectively. There are now clear systems that each class teacher uses to record individual pupils' progress. The school has also recently produced a whole school data analysis system in reading, writing and mathematics to identify the range of standards in every class across the National Curriculum levels. This strategy has raised teacher's awareness of the importance of ensuring brisk progress in their class as part of the drive to raise standards. It is also identifying underperformance of individual pupils. The testing of pupils is carried out much more regularly. Teachers are now aware of the importance of using the results of assessments to plan their lessons but this remains inconsistent through the school. In the best lessons there is a clear emphasis on building on previous learning and ensuring that there are different tasks to match pupils' varying needs. This results in good progress across all groups of pupils. However, in too many lessons there is not enough challenge for more able pupils or support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The effectiveness of teachers' questioning is inconsistent. Many teachers use questions that only require a simple answer and opportunities are missed for pupils to explain their understanding. Several teachers do not help pupils in thinking through their answers by asking additional questions. In the very small proportion of inadequate teaching, opportunities are missed to involve children in the activity and there is too much talk from the teacher.

The headteacher and LA specialists have worked hard to improve the curriculum for English and mathematics. Weekly timetables have specific sessions devoted to basic skills and this is beginning to have a positive impact on skills such as handwriting and presentation. Teachers are now planning units of work and are beginning to use the National Strategies more confidently. This is in its very early stages and staff are just beginning to understand the importance in balancing the curriculum effectively over time. The key priority for improvement has appropriately been in English and mathematics but there has been a start in addressing the weaknesses in the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum. There has been a significant increase in the number of computers both in the computer suite and in classrooms, which is allowing pupils more time to develop their skills. The proportion of time spent on ICT each week has increased. The co-ordinator has carried out an audit of the skills that staff need to teach the full ICT curriculum effectively and there are clear plans to develop teachers' expertise.

The guidance pupils receive on how to improve their work is getting better. Books are marked more consistently and most teachers check that pupils understand the feedback they are given. However, the setting of individual targets for pupils is at a very early stage. The new assessment systems are beginning to help the school to identify achievement of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

- Raise the school's expectations of the pupils and take closer account of information from assessments in planning for their different needs – satisfactory
- Improve the quality of the curriculum for English, mathematics and ICT – satisfactory

### Leadership and management

The key strengths of the headteacher identified in the inspection are ensuring that the school is beginning to improve its provision. She has a clear determination to tackle underachievement and to build on the school's strengths. She works extremely well with the IEB and effective external support to plan, implement and monitor improvements. There is a very clear focus on monitoring teaching and learning to support teachers in developing their skills. Teachers receive detailed and very well targeted areas for development that are achievable. This contributes well to improvements in the quality of teaching. The analysis of pupils' work has enabled the school to identify variations in the progress of different age groups. The new recording systems have only been put in place recently and staff are only just beginning to use this information to plan their lessons. At the time of this monitoring visit there is no deputy headteacher and the leadership responsibilities are being restructured. This places the full responsibility for monitoring on the shoulders of the headteacher and reduces the overall effectiveness of the monitoring processes.

The LA has worked hard to strengthen the role of the governing body. The move to an IEB is working very well. The board members have an excellent understanding of

the school's needs and a wide range of professional expertise. They have a clear commitment to supporting the school as it goes through key changes. Decision-making is very well organised. There is a clear commitment to raising standards and to hold the school to account. Members of the board value greatly the views of parents. Plans are in place to transfer responsibilities to a new shadow governing body and to support new members in taking up their new roles.

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

- Monitor the implementation of planned improvements closely, and evaluate their impact on pupils' achievement – satisfactory
- Strengthen the role of the governing body in holding the school to account for the quality of education and standards attained by the pupils – good

#### External support

The quality of the support from the LA is good and is having a positive impact on improving the school's provision. It has worked effectively in several different ways. The school has benefited from the organisation of using the expertise of two National Leaders of Education. These headteachers have contributed significantly to the well organised monitoring of teaching and learning and have led training sessions for staff on key issues such as data analysis. The organisation of additional links between staff from these Leaders' schools and Blaydon West Primary School are also working well, particularly the weekly support of the associate assistant headteacher. LA consultants have provided clearly focused support for key improvements in literacy, numeracy, assessment and the Foundation Stage. The implementation and deployment of the IEB is working well. These different forms of support are ensuring that the LA's statement of action is having a positive impact on the quality of the school's developments.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards and increase achievement through providing a better match of work to different pupils' needs.
- Develop the role of middle managers.
- Improve the use of teachers' questioning in lessons, particularly in whole class sessions.