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Mr R Turney  
The Headteacher  
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Cornfield Close  
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West Sussex  
BN17 6HY

Dear Mr Turney

#### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CORNFIELD SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 29 and 30 April 2008, 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 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

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 and Young People's Services for West Sussex.

Yours sincerely

Mike Kell  
Additional Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF CORNFIELD SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 29 and 30 April 2008

### Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, examined documents and students' work, and met with groups of students, the executive headteacher and other members of the leadership team. Discussions were also held with the chair of governors, the local authority lead adviser for the school and the education welfare officer.

### Context

Governors have initiated the recruitment process for a new substantive headteacher by advertising the post nationally, to which there has been a good response. An agency supply teacher taught mathematics throughout the spring term, but the school succeeded in making an appointment to the permanent post during that time. However, the new post holder did not begin working in the school until one week before this monitoring inspection took place.

This monitoring inspection focused on just three of the four development areas that were in the initial report when the school became subject to special measures in March 2007. The fourth one related to the quality of provision for the small number of girls in the school, but the last monitoring inspection confirmed that, as the school had addressed this issue effectively, it would not feature in future monitoring visits.

### Achievement and standards

There were emerging signs of students making more consistent progress at the time of the last monitoring inspection, and this position has been sustained. There are three main reasons for this improving situation. The overall quality of teaching is getting better as weaknesses identified at the time of the inspection are being addressed effectively. Secondly, students' improved attitudes and behaviour and staff's consistent application of the behaviour management strategy are having a growing impact on increasing the pace of learning. Fewer students lose learning time because of low level disruption or because they are out of the classroom, either of their own accord or because they have been sent out. Finally, teachers have a much better understanding of their students' prior achievements and they use this information to provide students with learning activities that interest and challenge them.

The school has responded well to the recommendation regarding individual education plans (IEPs). These are now only written for a small group of students whose additional learning needs are identified through a range of tests and diagnostic assessments. Similarly, a small number of students benefit from the introduction of Diamond Time, which involves one to one or small group work aimed at developing emotional literacy.

There are very encouraging signs in the provision for mathematics. The work that was done last term laid a firm foundation and the early indications are that this is beginning to reap dividends as the subject builds on that platform. The students now appreciate the subject much more because they find it interesting and more challenging. The provision for English is no longer a cause of concern. A period of stability has been followed by a period of growth as students' learning and progress accelerate.

The school is making significant progress in building on its procedures for tracking students' achievements and monitoring progress. An integrated system incorporates individual subject teachers' assessments, IEP targets and Diamond Time information. This enables students' progress to be measured based on regular assessments. This system has only been operational with accurate data for a short time and so no definitive conclusions can be drawn. There are, though, optimistic signals as the early indications are that students are beginning to progress at a rate that is at least satisfactory and frequently good, but the legacy of underachievement has not yet been eradicated fully. However, whilst the school is now in a position to measure students' progress it has not yet considered how to translate this information into a judgement of whether the extent of this progress is good enough, or possibly better than expected. It has not yet considered the criteria that it will use to gauge students' achievements.

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

- raise students' achievement, especially in English and mathematics, by ensuring that these subjects are taught well – satisfactory.

### Personal development and well-being

Some important pointers indicate the extent to which students' attitudes and behaviour have been transformed. There have been significant reductions in fixed term exclusions and the number of occasions when students are asked to leave the classroom. The proportion of students who qualify for weekly Golden Time (choice of activities) based on their attitudes, behaviour and effort has steadily increased too even though the school has twice made this more difficult by amending the criteria for eligibility. These are all important contributory factors in improving students' learning and rate of progress. Attendance remains an issue for a small group of students, although in most of these cases the reasons for absence are understandable, such as mental health problems or involvement with the youth offending team. If this small group is removed from the data, attendance is satisfactory. The school is working productively with the education welfare service to target the few remaining poor attenders and it has good procedures for doing this.

### Quality of provision

Lesson planning now follows a common format and good quality plans provide structure to lessons with a clear focus on what individual students, or small groups, are expected to learn. As a result, work in lessons is matched closely to extending students' learning and accelerating the rate of progress. This increases students' interest and enjoyment and so disruptions are reduced and so little time is lost in managing students' behaviour. Therefore, students learn more quickly and teachers

are able to evaluate the extent of this learning because they can measure how much has been learned compared with what individual students were expected to learn. Teachers are able to have higher expectations and make learning more challenging because a degree of rigour is now applied to assessment procedures. Following the input of local authority staff and links with Littlehampton Community School, teachers are more confident and more competent in assessing students' work in terms of National Curriculum levels. The improved accuracy of these assessments enables new work to be pitched at the right level. The students confirm that they know their target levels and report that teachers give them guidance and support by explaining what they need to do improve the standard of their work. Targets are also shared with parents so that they can support their children's learning.

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

- help students to achieve more by involving them in setting and evaluating their own more precise and challenging targets – good.

### Leadership and management

School leaders have built on the foundations that were apparent at the time of the last monitoring inspection. The systems that were initially absent, such as for assessing students and managing their behaviour, are now firmly embedded and there is a growing culture of high expectations of students' personal and academic progress. The pace of change is gaining momentum especially in terms of the growing acceptance by an increasing number of staff that everyone has to fulfil their particular responsibilities and that they all have to contribute at all times to maintaining a positive school ethos. The senior leadership team is growing in stature and confidence as it gets more adept at using the systems that it has implemented to determine the direction for change. The members can do this because, with the help of the local authority, they are becoming more skilled at evaluating the findings from monitoring and self review to formulate the actions that will drive forward school improvement. For instance, by carrying out detailed lesson observations in conjunction with the local authority, leaders have shifted the school from a position in November 2007 of 50% of lessons being judged as good or better (with 12.5% inadequate) to an average of up to 75% being good or better in the spring term 2008, with no inadequate teaching. The school, though, is conscious of the need to ensure that this improving practice is sustained.

The recognition by governors that they need to take a more active role in school development is gradually becoming more evident, especially in terms of challenging senior leaders and in seeking out for themselves what is happening in school. There is now a full complement of governors and the local authority has provided training in school evaluation. More governors now have an understanding of the role and governor information/induction packs have been produced. However, a more refined understanding of their responsibilities is not yet fully evident in practice.

While the leadership team and governors demonstrate a growing capacity to lead and manage the school autonomously, they are not yet in a wholly secure position to do this independently of the local authority.

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

- ensure that a viable leadership team is installed to achieve the school's aims through a rigorously evaluated improvement plan – satisfactory.

### External support

A number of local authority staff have maintained close oversight of the school's development. Their involvement has been effectively brokered and well coordinated by the lead adviser and so they have had a significant impact in a number of areas. These include supporting classroom practice in English and mathematics, working with governors to aid their involvement in school self-evaluation, and helping school leaders to refine their skills in analysing the data that they collect. Their close monitoring and support have been instrumental in helping the school to focus on the key areas that will raise its overall effectiveness.