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16 March 2009

Ms Lou Stapleton  
Headteacher  
Newlands Primary School  
Ullswater Road  
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Southampton  
SO16 9EA

Dear Ms Stapleton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Newlands Primary School

Following my visit with Christopher Grove, Additional Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 March 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings. The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2008. 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 – 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 Executive Director of Children's Services and Learning for Southampton.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Newlands Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 March 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, staff and pupils.

## Context

The new headteacher took up her post in January 2009. The school has appointed a new Year 6 teacher and is advertising for a deputy headteacher. The former special educational needs coordinator has left the school and the acting deputy headteacher has very recently taken on the role as inclusion manager. Teachers now take responsibility for teaching science, and some areas of the curriculum, including English, mathematics and science, are being led and managed by two members of staff.

## Achievement and standards

The headteacher has introduced greater rigour in the way data are analysed and used to help identify the standards at which pupils are working and the progress they are making. This has enabled staff to gain a more accurate view of the extent to which too many pupils are working below age-related expectations in English and mathematics. The school is now tracking the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Targets are set for pupils in English, mathematics and science; however, pupils do not always understand what their targets mean.

Standards are continuing to rise slowly, but progress throughout the school is too variable. Nevertheless, pupils are improving their speaking and listening skills as a result of the school's focused efforts in this area. Pupils continue to make better progress in mathematics than in English, and their reading skills are improving at a faster rate than their writing. The greatest progress being made in mathematical development is in Reception and Year 2. The year group with the largest proportion of pupils working within age-related expectations in mathematics is Year 6. In English, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making the most progress. The group of pupils making the least progress in English and mathematics across the school are those with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Those pupils whose parents take them on holiday during term time often make less progress than their peers.

The changes made to the science curriculum and the way the subject is taught are starting to bring about some improvements in the subject. However, progress in this area is very slow.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- accelerate progress and raise standards in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils are happy at school; they find some of their lessons more enjoyable than previously and value the good relationships they have with the staff as well as with their peers. Pupils' experience in the playground at lunchtime is improving. School council members have been involved in the decision to buy small games equipment for use by each class at lunchtime. The availability of the equipment encourages more pupils to play harmoniously in small groups. This results in a positive playground atmosphere, with little play that is overly boisterous. Organisational arrangements are good. Adult supervision, including involvement in games, leads to pupils' sense of well-being in the playground. Warning bells alert pupils to the need to tidy away the equipment, which leads to an orderly and calm return to classrooms at the end of lunchtime.

Attendance levels remain broadly average, but attendance-related issues are being tackled with greater rigour by the school. Although punctuality has not improved since the previous monitoring visit, the number of pupils who arrive at school after registers close has declined. However, a small minority of parents still do not ensure that their children arrive on time for the beginning of the school day. Good partnership with the education welfare service has led to decisive action to decrease the incidence of persistent absence.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve attendance and punctuality – satisfactory

### Quality of provision

Teachers' expectation of what pupils can achieve has increased following their improved use of information about pupil progress. Improvements to the quality of teaching have led to pupils becoming more attentive in lessons and demonstrating better attitudes to learning. The quality of teachers' planning has improved and is more consistent throughout the school. This has led to a greater focus on developing basic skills and more explicit teaching of key vocabulary. There are also more planned opportunities for pupils to talk, share ideas and discuss their thoughts. Many teachers now make effective use of strategies to support pupils with speaking and basic writing activities. Good teaching in the school is characterised by lessons that are well structured and include sufficient time for pupils to apply new skills and complete their work. In these lessons, the time spent for introducing work is brief and progresses at a good pace; teachers check pupils' understanding before pupils are sent off to work on their respective activities and work is placed within a meaningful context, for example, by being linked to real-life situations or learning in other areas. In a good Year 2 lesson, pupils learnt to use a computer programme to create block graphs about transport. This linked very well with their work on data



handling, which they had been doing in an earlier mathematics lesson. Pupils learnt to use information and communication technology (ICT) to organise and present their information and worked well independently at their computer. The teacher successfully maximised learning by including a writing activity alongside the ICT activity. Pupils completed a sheet, which included helpful prompts that enabled them to write a sentence about their comparison of different graphs. The teacher was skilful in her use of questions, which helped her to maintain a clear view of how much pupils understood and how well they were progressing. Consequently, the teacher was able to ensure that lower-attaining pupils received the additional guidance they required and that the more able were provided with adequate challenge.

Pupils are showing signs of being able to work more effectively when they are not working with an adult. However, teaching on the whole remains very directive. This promotes dependency and does not encourage pupils to develop the skills they need to solve problems for themselves; it also reduces opportunities for pupils to show initiative.

Some teachers are beginning to use ICT well to motivate and engage pupils. However, all too often the interactive whiteboard is not used interactively, which limits the potential of this resource to help accelerate learning.

Despite the progress made by the school, there are still too many weaknesses in teaching. Planning does not include sufficient detail about how the needs of pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be met. As a result, these pupils make insufficient progress. There is still a lack of challenge for the more able pupils, especially during the first part of lessons. The pace of learning remains slow in many lessons, with pupils and teachers being more focused on activities than on new learning and skills. The quality of support from teaching assistants is too variable; while some provide pupils with good support that complements teachers' efforts well, others add little value to pupils' learning despite having been provided with clear guidance.

Lessons, not just in English, but in other subjects as well, do not contribute as well as they might to helping pupils to value writing and develop their skills in this area. Teachers are beginning to make more use of assessment to inform their planning, but have yet to embed the use of assessment strategies in lessons to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Despite pockets of good practice, the quality of marking remains too variable and does not help pupils identify what it is they have done well or what they need to do to improve.

The school has already made some changes to the school day; however, the weekly timetable and schedule of work still does not make the most efficient use of time.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that information gained from tracking pupils' progress is used effectively, so that work is always well matched to pupils' needs – satisfactory
- improve the consistency of teaching to ensure that it is at least good throughout the school – satisfactory
- improve the curriculum through providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills in subjects across the curriculum – satisfactory

## Leadership and management

The newly appointed headteacher is providing clear and purposeful leadership, which is focusing the attention of the staff more closely on the areas in need of improvement. She is well supported by the acting deputy headteacher. This is leading to higher expectations, better use of data, and progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning and helping the school to improve. Staff are being held more closely to account for the progress made by pupils, and lesson observations are more rigorous. However, these do not make sufficient reference to the progress made by different groups of pupils. The school is in the process of reviewing and updating its improvement plan so that staff contribute more fully and develop a greater sense of ownership. Plans to help bring about improvement are now more sharply focused on the indented outcomes for learners, although these do not yet focus sufficiently on different groups. Staff are beginning to work more effectively as a team and meetings are more purposeful. However, leaders and managers at all levels are still not all contributing as well as they might to helping the school to improve. At a senior management level, there is more rigorous interrogation of data, but not all senior and middle managers are ensuring that data are consistently used well to help drive improvement in their areas of responsibility.

The school has adopted an interim performance management policy provided by the local authority (LA) as there was not one in place previously. However, this has yet to be fully implemented and job descriptions have yet to be reviewed and updated.

The governing body continues to be supportive of the school's work. Governors are better informed about the work of the school and are benefiting from training provide by the LA to develop their understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management by ensuring that systems and procedures to monitor overall performance are rigorous and applied well to effect improvement in teaching, achievement and standards – satisfactory

## External support

The school has benefited from satisfactory support provided by the LA and the headteacher has received good support in the first few weeks of her new role. This

has enabled her to make a brisk start and focus on raising standards instead of becoming too diverted by wider issues. Education welfare services, for example, are now targeting more rigorously those families whose children do not attend school as regularly as they should.

Staff appreciate the guidance they receive from teaching coaches about how to improve their practice and how to facilitate learning. One teacher comments positively on advice she received about making pupils her critical friend. She states that this strategy is helping her to evaluate and improve her practice more effectively.

Some of the senior leaders have attended training provided by the LA, with the result that they are developing a better understanding of how to interpret national data. It has also raised their awareness of the need to focus more sharply on areas of improvement. The support provided by the science adviser has led to more investigative science.