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7 July 2009

Ms A Gard  
The Acting Headteacher  
Stafford Junior School  
Ringwood Road  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex  
BN22 8UA

Dear Ms Gard

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stafford Junior School

Following my visit with Suzanne Gerred to your school on 23 and 24 June 2009, 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 January 2009. 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 be appointed subject to the following qualifications:

- the school ensures appropriate and sustained mentoring and support
- provision for newly qualified teachers will be kept under review by the school's local authority adviser.

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 Director of Children's Services for East Sussex, the Deputy Director as chair of the management intervention board for the school, and the Regional Inspection Provider.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
Her Majesty's Inspector



## Special measures: monitoring of Stafford Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 June 2009

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting headteacher, members of the school's senior leadership team, groups of pupils, the chairman and vice chairman elect of governors, the Deputy Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and a representative from the local authority.

### Context

The local authority has rescinded the governing body's delegated powers for the time being, and a management intervention board chaired by the Deputy Director of Children's Services for East Sussex is in place. The chair and vice chair of the governing body and a number of governors resigned after the school was placed in special measures. A new chair and vice chair have been elected and vacancies on the governing body are being filled successfully. The substantive headteacher has been on sick leave since January 2009 so a senior advisory headteacher and deputy headteacher have been seconded to the school by the local authority.

### Achievement and standards

Rigorous systems to track pupils' progress have been put in place by the senior leadership team. The response to identified underachievement is prompt and well directed. This is leading to improvements, especially in reading. However, progress is not yet fast enough to close the gap between the school's standards and national averages, particularly in writing and mathematics. There was little evidence of extended writing or of systematic tailoring of tasks to match pupils' capabilities. School data indicates that attainment in the 2009 national tests for Year 6 pupils will be well below the national average. The school's leaders for literacy and numeracy, who are both members of the senior leadership team, have identified key areas of weakness and are developing well targeted strategies to tackle these. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is having a positive impact. Teachers do not yet, however, have sufficiently high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve. These pupils are very amenable and take trouble to do what is asked of them but they are not currently challenged enough or their independence fostered sufficiently so their learning is limited by the expectations of the staff.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2009:

- improve standards, particularly in English and mathematics, by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve – satisfactory.

### Personal development and well-being

This aspect was not inspected.



## Quality of provision

Since the last inspection, there has been a concentrated and well directed programme of consultancy, training and modelling of good practice by the local authority, working well with the senior leadership team. Teachers are assessing pupils' levels of attainment more accurately and using that information to develop schemes of work and lesson plans that build on what pupils already know and can do, but these are not consistently implemented. In all year groups, appropriate opportunities are created for pupils to work in pairs or small groups to solve practical problems, make decisions, negotiate with each other and then present their work to the class. More needs to be done to ensure that pupils of all abilities are fully challenged in mixed ability classes and develop into more independent learners. Both in lessons and in the marking of written work, care is taken to encourage pupils and build up their confidence but praise is not often enough balanced by specific guidance on how to improve.

The curriculum has been revised since the last inspection and satisfactory progress has been made in ensuring that skills are developed progressively from year to year. This has yet to work its way through the school so that, for example, while topics change, there is little clear progression between Years 5 and 6 in English. Although it is still being refined, the curriculum now meets National Curriculum and statutory requirements. There are regular opportunities for personal development through the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils enjoy and clearly benefit from the cross-curricular approach developed through 'learning journeys', especially when teachers take full advantage of opportunities to extend pupils' vocabulary and their ability to calculate – a strategy that needs to be more consistently implemented.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve teachers' skills in assessing pupils' attainment so that they can use this information to plan work more closely matched to what pupils already know and can do – satisfactory
- implement a curriculum which meets National Curriculum requirements and builds learning systematically throughout the school – satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

Vigorously and imaginatively led by the acting headteacher and deputy, the newly formed senior leadership team has shown enterprise and decisiveness in tackling the key issues identified in the last inspection and in reports from the local authority and the School Improvement Partner. It is evidence of the skill and carefulness of senior leaders that morale amongst staff is high. The acting headteacher's decision to develop management capacity throughout the staff by widely distributing subject responsibilities has been well supported by the local authority's programme of training and modelling of good practice. Several teachers are inexperienced and so their learning curve as managers is very steep. The senior leadership team is a good



role model in prioritising and implementing strategies for improvement and is establishing robust monitoring systems. Appointments have been made to add further strength to the school's leadership at the start of the coming academic year. Pupils speak very positively about the changes they have noticed: a more stimulating learning environment and more engaging teaching. The impact of these changes on achievement and standards has yet to be demonstrated.

Since the last inspection, there has been a thorough review of the school's health and safety standards. Appropriate systems for the assessment and management of risk on site and on school trips are now in place. Effective steps have been taken to improve the security of the site. Statutory safeguarding requirements have been met in full.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- strengthen the capacity of leaders and managers to prioritise and implement strategies for improvement and check their effectiveness in raising attainment – satisfactory
- ensure that statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are met in full – good.

#### External support

The support provided for the school by the local authority has been outstanding. The programme of staff training, guidance with planning and setting of appropriate targets, modelling of good practice and monitoring of progress has been developed in consultation with the school's leadership. It has been successfully tailored to meet immediate needs and address weaknesses without overwhelming the school community. The secondment of a very effective senior advisory headteacher and deputy has been crucial in restoring confidence and driving improvement. They are well supported by the local authority adviser and the School Improvement Partner. The management intervention board is providing strong governance.

#### Priorities for further improvement

The five key issues identified in the January 2009 Ofsted report continue to be priorities for further improvement.

