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Mrs A Gard
Stafford Junior School
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Dear Mrs Gard

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stafford Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 18 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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 – good

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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, the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex and the Inspection Service Provider.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham

Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Stafford Junior School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 18 March 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including six lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the chair and vice chair of the governing body, the acting headteacher, her senior leadership team, teachers, pupils, a group of parents and the school's adviser from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous visit, delegated powers have been returned to the governing body and agreement reached that the school should enter into a formal partnership with its main feeder infant school, effective from September 2010. The secondment of the acting headteacher has been extended for a further two years. An additional teacher has been appointed to support the teaching of mathematics and English in Year 6.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Systematic collection and analysis of data show that pupils' progress in all years has accelerated sharply. Levels of attainment in Year 6 are no longer well below national averages and, while these pupils have not progressed quite as rapidly as those in younger years, there is persuasive evidence of marked improvement in mathematics, reading and writing. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported by the school's deployment of trained teaching assistants. Expectations are generally high but not consistently so.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They have responded with enthusiasm and energy to a more interactive style of teaching, enjoying opportunities to work collaboratively and to become more independent learners. When success criteria are clearly set out, pupils find peer-assessment helpful, both as assessors and as the assessed.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

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

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupil outcomes were not an area for improvement and were not specifically inspected; however, the behaviour seen was generally excellent. Pupils were



confident and articulate, clearly enjoying recently extended opportunities to show initiative and develop organisational skills.

The effectiveness of provision

All of the teaching observed was at least good and much was outstanding. Systematic analysis of pupils' current standards and of their rates of progress shapes planning so that lessons now successfully connect with and extend pupils' knowledge and skills. Pupils' learning is well supported by teachers' increasingly confident use of varied assessment methods. Teachers use open questions to check and confirm understanding, encourage peer- and self-evaluation by pupils and, in the marking of written work, generally but not always balance encouragement with guidance on how to improve. Pupils work cheerfully and, on the whole, productively together, especially when group work is closely monitored by teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers' skills and confidence have been enhanced by a substantial programme of professional development, which has included modelling of best practice and opportunities for all staff to observe teaching and learning in other schools. Some approaches, for example, have been developed from best practice seen in infant schools. These are helping pupils make the transition from one phase to the next without loss of momentum.

The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements, drawing on the National Strategy frameworks for English and mathematics. It has become more responsive to pupils' individual needs through well-directed interventions and opportunities for accelerated learning. The school's continuing focus on extended writing is prompting an imaginative and ambitious approach both from boys and from girls. One-to-one tuition is proving more effective now that it is presented in blocks of time rather than extended over several weeks. A thorough curriculum review has led to more productive links between subjects, supported by new resources and by input from local authority consultants. Increasing use of information and communication technology is encouraging pupils' independence and developing important links between school and home-based learning.

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 – good
- implement a curriculum which meets National Curriculum requirements and also builds learning systematically throughout the school – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Incisive leadership, the setting of ambitious targets and modelling of good practice are well supported and monitored by the governing body and the local authority. Links with local schools and an increasingly active liaison with parents are



contributing to staff development and pupils' progress. Medium-term planning has become more focused and secure now that the acting headteacher's secondment has been extended for a further two years and the school's formal partnership with a nearby infant school has been approved. The school's development plan presents challenging but realistic targets and gives impetus and coherence to day-to-day management. Regular and accurate analysis of pupils' attainment and progress sets the priorities for lesson planning and triggers interventions that are perceptibly raising standards and enhancing the school's capacity for further improvement.

Procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure, including those relating to child protection, are thorough and well embedded.

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 – good
- ensure that statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils are met in full – good.

External support

The local authority continues to make an important contribution to the school's development through funding, consultancy and guidance. There is a positive and productive relationship between the adviser from the East Sussex School Improvement Service and the school's leadership and management. The school also benefits from the links being developed with other schools, through which good practice is shared.

Priorities for further improvement

The five key issues identified in the January 2009 Ofsted report continue to be priorities for further improvement. Particular attention should be paid to raising standards further by ensuring that:

- able pupils are consistently presented with appropriate challenge and are supported by a programme that promotes creative and independent learning.