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24 March 2010

Mrs Stephanie Tasker  
Headteacher  
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Liverpool  
Merseyside  
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Dear Mrs Tasker

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pinehurst Primary School

Following my visit with Gordon Alston and Kath Harris, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 22 and 23 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2009. 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 Director of Children's Services for Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Liz Godman  
Additional Inspector



## Special measures: monitoring of Pinehurst Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 March 2010

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, the Chair of Governors and a representative from the local authority.

### Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in December 2009, a new teacher has joined the Early Years Foundation Stage and there have been a number of other changes of teachers in lower Key Stage 2. This includes some temporary appointments.

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

Pupils' progress in lessons is accelerating as the pace of learning increases and a greater volume of work is covered. This is the result of higher expectations of pupils. However, occasionally, higher-attaining pupils are still not challenged sufficiently to reach the levels of which they are capable. Pupils' writing is improving owing to more planned times for them to practise these skills. The presentation of their work is gradually becoming neater and clearer, especially among the older pupils. Although pupils are gaining in their basic mathematical skills, the opportunities to apply these skills in practical situations or to solve problems remain limited. Pupils' ability to work independently and to research things for themselves is growing as there are more occasions planned when they can use these skills. However, this is not entirely consistent and sometimes there is little independent work in lessons. For example, sometimes the high levels of support increase pupils' dependence on an adult, rather than encouraging them to think for themselves. The small groups for pupils who have fallen behind are enabling many to make better progress and to catch up. This is especially so where the activities in these groups are closely planned to meet the needs of individual pupils and help them to overcome difficulties they have experienced in their class lessons.

The school's tracking data indicates accelerating progress in reading, writing and mathematics, although this is more consistent in reading across the school than in the other subjects. Slower progress in writing and mathematics persists in some classes, especially where staffing has been less stable or where assessment has been more cautious or less consistent. Work in the books of pupils in Year 6 shows some examples of rapid improvement in English and mathematics for pupils of all abilities. This arises from increased opportunities for pupils to write in a wide variety of different forms and for them to cover a greater volume of work in mathematics.



Although achievement is improving, attainment remains low, particularly in writing. The school's careful tracking of progress indicates some slight improvements in attainment for the current Year 6 pupils. However, there is long legacy of underachievement. This means that there remains a considerable way to go before pupils' attainment reaches the nationally expected levels of which the pupils are capable.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school, particularly in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory.

Other relevant outcomes for pupils

Attendance has continued to improve steadily, but nevertheless remains low overall. The numbers of persistent absentees has also reduced, owing to the school's improved strategies for securing better attendance. More effective use of attendance data, better management of individual cases and the developing roles of education welfare staff and the school's learning mentor are bearing fruit. In addition, the school has successfully reduced the numbers of pupils who are late to school.

Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is improving. In lessons pupils are showing increasingly positive attitudes to learning. This, in part, is due to improvements to teaching which are enhancing their enjoyment of lessons. Some restlessness still persists when pupils are not stretched enough or undertake mundane tasks. Occasionally, low-level chattering or calling out of answers distracts others from concentrating on the lesson. However, overall, pupils are becoming better prepared for the future as their literacy and numeracy skills develop and they have opportunities to use these skills, for example in preparing a presentation in information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils' cultural understanding is growing as a result of recent initiatives for them to link with people from a variety of cultural heritages in the local community. For example, recent links with the local Chinese community have enhanced their enjoyment and their engagement in school.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise attendance to at least the levels expected of similar schools – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage reflects much better the different areas of learning, enabling children to make greater progress. Adult-led sessions are assisting children's personal, social and emotional development, as they grow in their understanding of how to share toys or tasks. A more interesting and



stimulating classroom is increasingly enabling children to show greater independence, for example when choosing activities. Support from adults during these child-initiated activities is proving more effective in extending children's skills in communication, language and literacy and in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. However, limitations to the outdoor area continue to restrict children's access to the full Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

The school has successfully eradicated inadequate teaching and a greater proportion of teaching is now securely satisfactory, although some weaknesses remain. In some lessons, teachers adhere rigidly to what has been planned and so miss opportunities to correct misunderstandings or to vary the lesson according to pupils' responses. In other lessons, they omit a key step in the lesson so that pupils remain confused about what is expected of them. In some less effective lessons the pace of learning remains slow, pupils are too passive and the teacher talks for too long. As a result, pupils have insufficient opportunities to explain the strategies they have used, for example in solving a problem in mathematics. Although lessons are now planned with a consistently clear structure, in many instances the work is insufficiently matched to meet the full range of needs in the class.

The use of assessment to support learning remains insufficiently developed. Where it is used most effectively the teacher now keeps a careful check on learning in the lesson and modifies the teaching accordingly. However, this practice is not yet consistent and is at an early stage of development as a whole. Teachers now explain clearly the learning objectives for the lesson at the outset, but pupils sometimes remain unclear as to how to meet these objectives. This is because the criteria for success are not yet consistently expressed in a form pupils always understand and they are not involved in considering how they will know when they have met them. As many lessons progress, pupils still do not evaluate or describe how well they or their peers have progressed towards the lesson objectives or their targets. Consequently, by the end of the lesson they are unsure as to what they have learned. Most older pupils know their targets for the term and the levels at which they are working, but scrutiny of their books indicates that it is not yet always clear when they have met them. As a result, those pupils who have already met their current targets are not stretched or challenged further. Marking has improved and pupils say that it is now more consistent, with increasingly clear guidance to them on how to improve their work. Where it is stronger, pupils comment that there is a subsequent check on their progress in addressing the areas identified for improvement.

The curriculum continues to develop since the last monitoring inspection. Teachers plan carefully, using materials from the National Strategies. This ensures improving coverage and continuity. However, teachers do not always adapt the plans to meet the needs of the particular individuals in their classes. Consequently, what pupils have learned previously does not always provide the starting point for the next steps. There are growing examples of writing in different genres through the



'thematic' approach the school is developing. For example, in Year 2 pupils describe toys and in Year 5 they reflect on the role of a Hindu priest. Generally, time for writing in the different subjects of the curriculum is more consistent than at the last monitoring inspection, although this is not so in Years 3 and 4. Pupils enthuse about the recent themed days such as 'It's your choice' and the 'Alien invasion'. These days are a growing source of motivation for pupils and provide increasing opportunities for them to link areas of the curriculum together, such as dance, drama and ICT. A wider range of clubs extend the challenge for gifted and talented pupils and allow all pupils to develop other skills, for example in sports. The curriculum continues to be effective in supporting pupils' personal development. It is making an improved contribution to pupils' academic progress, particularly in writing.

Care, guidance and support continue to promote pupils' personal development. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those at risk of becoming vulnerable is increasingly matched to their needs. This enables these pupils to make better progress, as well as to be included fully in the life of the school. Adults are vigilant, ensuring that pupils are cared for throughout the school day, including when playing outside at playtimes. The learning mentor is improving links with parents and carers, and external agencies, and has played a key part in increasing the attendance of some persistent absentees.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that the overall quality of teaching and learning is at least good throughout the school, thus eradicating inadequate teaching – satisfactory.
- Adapt the curriculum so that it better meets pupils' needs and develops their basic literacy and numeracy skills – satisfactory.
- Ensure that marking and academic guidance consistently help pupils to understand how to improve their work – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The evaluation undertaken by senior leaders is contributing increasingly well to a clear picture of the school's strengths and of the improvements which have been made. Monitoring of progress in relation to the areas for improvement, identified at the last inspection, is thorough and systematic. As a result, leaders and governors have a realistic view of what has been achieved to date and of how much more remains to be done. There is clear identification of areas for further or continuing improvement, both in relation to the quality of teaching and to pupils' learning and progress. Monitoring has identified key next steps in this regard. For example, there are plans to develop teachers' understanding of the characteristics of effective teaching through modelling and coaching. Staff are responding positively to the feedback and advice they are given and are eager to improve their performance. The subject leaders for literacy and numeracy and the coordinator for special educational needs are gaining a clearer view of strengths and weaknesses in their



areas. They are becoming increasingly accountable for contributing to the necessary improvements. All these actions are signs of the school's continuing improvement, but their effects on provision and pupils' learning and progress have yet to be realised fully.

The governing body is fully involved in monitoring the school's progress as part of the school improvement project team. As a result, there is a coherent and consistent understanding of how well the school is progressing. The Chair of Governors knows the school well and is supported with growing effectiveness by other governors who are asking questions to challenge the school and to hold leaders to account. However, there have been occasions when governors' meetings have been inoperative, which to some extent limits their effectiveness in this respect.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation in order to hold leaders, managers and governors to account for improving pupils' achievement – satisfactory.

#### External support

The School Improvement Partner provides a good level of challenge and support. Regular reviews by the local authority keep a careful check on the school's progress and there is effective partnership working between the school and the local authority. This includes the work of the project team, which monitors closely pupils' progress and other improvements. Additional support from the local authority is well measured and tailored to match the school's needs. Overall, external support is enabling the school to make steady and consistent progress in securing improvements and in building an increased capacity to sustain this in the longer term.

#### Priorities for further improvement

The main priorities for improvement remain those identified at the last inspection and at the last monitoring visit.