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Mrs C de Sausmarez
Talavera Junior School
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Dear Mrs de Sausmarez

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Talavera Junior School

Following my visit with Carole Skinner, additional inspector, to your school on 2 and 3 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 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 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

David Collard
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Talavera Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 2–3 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other members of staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the inspection, the substantive headteacher has been on long-term absence and an acting headteacher has been appointed from a local and successful federated school. There have been no other staff changes although a new management structure has been implemented.

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

Pupils' achievement is inconsistent and overall is still inadequate although there are some initial signs of it improving in individual lessons. This is the pattern across all different ability groups. It is better in the upper half of the school due to higher levels of challenge in Years 5 and 6. In one mathematics lesson, the teacher, while undertaking a new topic, quickly readjusted the planning to take account of pupils' prior knowledge. This ensured that they did not repeat work unnecessarily and that they had to think hard. Often in Years 3 and 4, because teachers are not using assessment information well enough, pupils' learning is not improving. Pupils then become bored and fidgety and complete too little work. In discussion, older pupils acknowledge that they could do better, although they feel they are improving. Pupils do sometimes enjoy the work on offer but not always. For example, in one lesson a pupil was not clear what he had to do and had little interest in finding out.

Levels of attainment are below and often well below those expected for pupils' ages. This is especially the case in writing and some aspects of mathematics. Writing styles are generally immature, although many pupils' understanding of grammatical structure is better. For instance, older pupils use speech marks when asked to write play scripts and know how to enhance their stories using adjectives and adverbs. In mathematics, calculation and number work are secure. However, pupils cannot use these skills when problem-solving because, teachers are not identifying this as a weakness and so they are not given enough opportunity to do so. This is partly due to the fact that a number of teachers do not take account of pupils' individual needs. In one lesson in the lower half of the school the teacher asked pupils to work through some examples in a text book, but those with special educational needs found great difficulty in reading the questions. This lack of adaptation in the

planning is the key factor separating satisfactory from inadequate learning and particularly so for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Comparisons with the 2009 national test results, not available at the time of the section 5 inspection, showed a very significant fall both in attainment and pupils' progress from those in 2008. The school's analysis of this period indicates that better teaching in Year 6 had masked serious underachievement in earlier years. With good professional support for teachers in these other years, this is now being successfully tackled, but as yet, satisfactory learning is not yet firmly embedded in all classes.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

In discussion, pupils do not show high levels of enthusiasm for learning. They cite lunch and break time as their favourite things about school. However they speak more positively about how behaviour has significantly improved this term. They say that there are fewer incidents both in lessons and in the playground, a fact supported by the lower number of exclusions and calmer atmosphere around the school. This is allowing pupils, particularly boys, to feel more secure about working together, sharing ideas and feeling safe both in lessons and at times when they are not directly supervised. There are almost no racial incidents and pupils from different backgrounds, especially those from Nepal, are integrated well. Nevertheless, there are isolated incidences of poor behaviour. Improved systems and procedures, using both internal and external support are having a good influence on minimising these occurrences. Pupils are beginning to take more initiative and responsibility such as helping to decide on playground resources.

The effectiveness of provision

The inconsistency in teaching seen during this inspection is similar to that identified by the school. In the two upper years, teaching is generally at least satisfactory. In the lower half, over half the lessons seen were inadequate. Nevertheless, there are signs of improvement in some of these classes and teachers have been provided with further training and opportunities to see teaching in other schools. This has stemmed the tide of falling underachievement, although at this stage it has not improved it. As a result of concerted support and professional development, over half of the weaker teaching identified last term is now satisfactory. In all classes, daily planning is better. In the best lessons, pupils are given interesting and motivating work which they tackle with enthusiasm. In lessons where teaching is inadequate, teachers do not use information on how well individual pupils are doing to help them identify the specific work to help them make up lost ground. Marking is inconsistent. It is generally undertaken conscientiously but some does not provide pupils with an idea of what or how to improve and is then not followed up to ensure this has happened. Pupils' targets are better in English than in mathematics. In English, stringent analysis of assessment has taken place and plans are well under way with local authority advisers to work on identifying where progress can be



improved. From this there has been tangible improvement. In mathematics, too much emphasis is placed on mechanically working on arithmetic. As a result, pupils are not encouraged to think for themselves. Presentation is still weak although there are signs of improvement. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially in the lower half of the school, are too low which is also where teachers do not consistently manage the challenging behaviour of some pupils.

Suitable welfare, care and support are provided for all pupils. Those with English as an additional language benefit from bilingual support and the school works well with the army welfare service to overcome any potential difficulties with the high mobility. The welfare of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as those with statements of special educational needs is of high importance and all systems are in place to ensure everybody is safeguarded.

Judgement

- Raise the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to the level of the best so that all pupils, and in particular boys, make faster progress in mathematics and writing, by making sure that:
 - work is consistently matched to the different needs of pupils
 - adults make consistent use of strategies to manage the behaviour of individual pupils
 - a range of teaching styles is used to engage pupils in their learning
 - there is consistency in the use of day-to-day marking and assessment so that all pupils understand what they need to do to improve
 - systems for assessing pupils' progress and setting targets are understood by all adults and are consistently applied – inadequate progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since her appointment, the acting headteacher has produced a good self-evaluation that has clearly identified the weaknesses. A robust plan has been put into operation which is tackling the most important elements. She has established a useful appraisal system for teachers and ensured that they are accountable for the progress of their pupils. This has been more successful for some than for others. Staff understand that more still needs to be done, but are committed to improve their practice. While many initiatives are in their infancy, staff say there is a tangible difference in morale. This all bodes well for future improvement although, until the leadership structure has been stabilised, there can only be limited success.

The school improvement plan sets out the correct future priorities and there have been early successes. For example, there are regular pupil performance meetings to ensure that potential underachievement is identified early. A full assessment has been taken of pupils' attainment on entry and this has been used to set targets for future achievement. From this analysis, teachers can see that in most classes and subjects, nearly half of pupils are making the expected levels of progress but this



increases incrementally to over 70% by Year 6 and over 80% in reading. It is this inconsistency that is now at the heart of further school development so that all progress is raised to at least the level of the best. The governing body has become increasingly supportive and, more importantly, challenging as governors' expertise has increased. New expertise has been brought onto the governing body and associate governors have been appointed to alleviate the problems with the high mobility of families. As was rightly suggested by the Chair of the Governing Body, it has been a steep learning curve.

Judgement

- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, are effective in driving forward improvements by:
 - taking a more systematic, regular approach to monitoring
 - sharply focusing on the intended outcomes for different groups of pupils and subjects
 - ensuring that all pupils' attainment is assessed on entry, regularly tracked and that the data are used to inform interventions and evaluate their impact – satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority has provided extensive, well-placed support to the school. Following the previous inspection a full review was undertaken and, where teaching was found to have weaknesses, robust additional training and support were organised. Specialist subject support has also been provided, firstly in English where there have been initial improvements and subsequently in mathematics which is still in its very early stages. The local authority is also working actively to resolve issues with staffing and to ensure an improved capacity for improvement. The statement of action sets out the correct priorities within appropriate timescales but, because of a lack of knowledge at the time it was prepared, has set the proportions for good and better teaching at levels that cannot be achieved. These are presently being revised to a realistic but challenging level to ensure that the timescale for removal of special measures can be adhered to.