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Mr D Knollys
Headteacher
Moorlands Junior School
Chantry Mead Road
Bath
BA2 2DE

Dear Mr Knollys

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Moorlands Junior School

Following my visit to the school on 5 and 6 July, 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 July 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 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 Bath and North East Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Mo Roberts
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 5 and 6 July 2010

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher and deputy headteacher, the Chair of Governors, the local authority representative, the science coordinator and two groups of pupils. Six lessons were observed.

Context

Moorlands Junior School has formally approved a federation with Moorlands Infants School and a substantive federation headteacher has been appointed from 1 January 2011. An interim headteacher has been appointed to lead the school until then. A temporary acting deputy headteacher has been appointed from within the school for the same time period. One member of staff, who was previously on long-term sick leave, took redundancy. The current temporary deputy headteacher has secured a substantive post and the interim headteacher is returning to his own school.

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

Pupils have continued to make at least steady progress, and in some instances good progress, and are catching up towards expected levels. Results from the school's own moderated marking of the external Year 6 tests shows pupils have broadly met the basic (floor) targets set by the government but not all those set by the local authority and the school. Higher achievers exceeded their target in English but narrowly missed it in mathematics. Despite having improved their work from the start of the year, pupils of average ability missed their targets in all subjects. Most pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities reached their predicted levels. Those learning English as an additional language attained well. A small group of boys pulled the average down and it is a priority that a similar situation is tackled in one other year group next year. Year 5 have caught up rapidly and look on track to reach their targets next year. Progress in years 3 and 4, although in the right direction, is not consistent enough. Science assessments have been undertaken in all classes but they are still being adapted to capture all aspects of the subject. Pupils spoken to clearly enjoy their learning, including science, and appreciate all the different things the teachers have done to make lessons more interesting. Pupils are correct in saying lessons are more lively. Overall the legacy of underachievement is being steadily tackled.

Progress since the last monitoring visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the progress of pupils, particularly in mathematics and science, to ensure that no group is underachieving – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour remains good and the few pupils who had difficulties have been supported effectively and exclusions have been kept to a minimum. The reward system is seen by pupils to be fair and motivating. Dinner times have improved; there is now a more sociable atmosphere with no long queues waiting for food. More clubs are run so pupils have a good range of options for different types of activity. Attendance is improving, with pupils keen to win the weekly cup and to gain gold cards for being attentive and doing good work in their lessons. Pupils have raised money for Haiti's earthquake survivors. They practised their money and team working skills during the recent school fundraiser and have entertained family and friends in a successful production about the Tudors. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported by the personal, health, social and emotional programme, and the exciting assemblies which suitably emphasise personal responsibility.

The effectiveness of provision

The school's detailed monitoring shows teaching and learning in 60% of lessons are now good or better. During the visit this was not quite replicated but it was evident that, overall, teaching has continued to improve. The residual weaknesses are in relation to the effectiveness of assessment in lessons and in ensuring it is used to move pupils forward as swiftly as possible. A few teachers still fail to tailor questions sufficiently to ensure pupils have to think hard enough. Most of the time the main purpose of the lesson is clear and pupils know what they are trying to achieve. Occasionally more clarity is needed to sharpen pupils' focus and sense of urgency. Expectations are higher but are not yet consistently so in all lessons. Teaching support is appropriate but is not always well enough prepared ahead of time, so precious minutes can be lost. The curriculum continues to develop well and the pupils have benefited, in science, from the visits and work undertaken at a secondary school. The high quality of care for pupils has been maintained.

Progress since the last monitoring visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve teaching, the assessment of pupils' learning and the curriculum by ensuring consistency of good practice throughout the school – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher have done an excellent job but the school is faced with two more changes of headteacher due to the timing of the federation. The current leadership team have developed the school in numerous ways and, through detailed action plans, have made improvements on all the key issues. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked alongside teachers,

and have supported and demonstrated good classroom practice as well as very effective management. Parents greatly appreciate the hard work of this leadership team. Its analysis of the quality of teaching and learning has been effective in helping teachers to identify development points. Given the legacy of pupil underachievement, pupils have made acceptable gains and their progress is now more accurately tracked. The staff are beginning to take ownership of this system. It has allowed the school to identify where extra interventions are needed and has improved equal opportunities. The staff, as a whole, have developed their skills and are now poised to begin to take on more middle management responsibilities. Science requires additional impetus to ensure the subject action plan is completed. The governors have worked exhaustively to successfully bring about the federation and to appoint the federation headteacher for January, as well as a new interim headteacher to cover the period until 1 January 2011. The interim headteacher has been given appropriate briefing but has not yet been provided with a sufficiently clear action plan to ensure everyone has a shared expectation of what is to be sustained and developed in the period to January. The outgoing team has developed, with external help, the school's overall self-evaluation to help maintain a general continuity of purpose.

Improve leadership and management at all levels so that leaders and managers:

- develop a concise set of agreed priorities for action with clear success criteria related to pupils' progress – satisfactory
- take rapid and decisive action in order to implement the actions consistently – satisfactory
- carry out robust and ongoing monitoring and evaluation so that all are clear about the difference that their actions make to pupils' academic progress – good.

External support

The local authority has offered the school governors very good support to successfully bring about the federation. The school has been monitored regularly but external help for English and science in particular has been limited.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure there is a detailed action plan in place and approved by the governors so the new interim headteacher can provide continuity and so that progress can be sustained.