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Mr N Hodgess  
Talavera Junior School  
Gun Hill  
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Hampshire  
GU11 1RG

Dear Mr Hodgess

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Talavera Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 6–7 July 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 October 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 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 second monitoring inspection on 6–7 July 2010

## Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with various staff including the interim headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.

## Context

Since the last visit, the previous interim headteacher has rejoined her school and has been replaced by another interim headteacher until the end of this term. The substantive headteacher has resigned and procedures for appointing a new headteacher have begun. A new interim headteacher has been appointed for next term and will be staying with the school to ensure continuity until a substantive headteacher has been appointed. Three teachers have resigned and will be leaving at the end of this term. New, experienced teachers have been appointed to replace them.

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

Pupils are making increased levels of progress since the last visit. This is particularly the case in writing, where the school has placed most emphasis. In mathematics, progress is not yet adequate across the school. Progress is generally better in the upper half of the school because satisfactory and better teaching is more consistent. Nevertheless, the school's data show that in all classes, progress is improving and in some individual classes, it is good. The overall progress of boys still remains an issue. The latest national test results, while not yet validated, confirm that the attainment of pupils in Year 6 in English has significantly improved from last year. In this subject, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 has very significantly increased. In mathematics, progress is not yet high enough and so attainment in this subject is still well below the national average. In lessons, pupils are making satisfactory progress in Years 5 and 6 but only in some classes in Years 3 and 4. For example, a good lesson in English was characterised by a clear understanding by pupils of what they were expected to achieve. This came about through the good planning that focused on individual achievement and how best to move it on. A group of boys were concentrating very well on the text through the use of a tape recording, and the task they had been set encouraged them to delve into their own thoughts about the story. This contrasted with another lesson in Year 4 where, even though a considerable time had been spent on planning, the pupils were still unclear what they had to do and so achieved very little. Here, behaviour deteriorated and pupils talked among themselves and did not complete the writing expected of them.

Progress data for each class shows that, where teaching is good, pupils are making up lost ground quickly. In some cases this is at twice that expected. However, this is not universal across all years and so pupils are not making up for the legacy of previous underachievement. Progress rates in both reading and writing are significantly better than in mathematics. In writing, pupils know more about the targets set for them and how they can achieve these. This is helping them see when they have improved and is increasing their motivation for learning. In discussion, some pupils, mostly in the upper half of the school, could talk about the levels they have achieved, saying that, to do better, they needed to improve the descriptive elements in their stories. Across the school too much emphasis is placed on computational skills in mathematics, without giving pupils opportunities to think, such as through relevant and real-life problem-solving. Consequently, pupils find it difficult to transfer the skills they have learnt into unfamiliar situations.

### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Most pupils enjoy their learning and say that things are improving. Pupils are generally thoughtful and helpful to each other both in lessons and when not directly supervised. At lunchtimes, they play well in small groups or pairs and there is little bickering. Behaviour is generally satisfactory although the school acknowledges that in each year group there is a small proportion of pupils who do not behave well all the time. This has been tackled effectively and with vigour, being the reason why temporary exclusions have risen since the previous visit. This is now starting to stabilise and reduce as pupils know the boundaries within which they must operate. There is a direct correlation between exciting teaching and good behaviour since almost all pupils respond very positively when they are engaged in challenging and interesting work. For instance, a 'crime scene' lesson, in which pupils had simulated CCTV pictures and police evidence, was far better received than in one where pupils had few resources to work with. The lack of good, well-conceived practical research and enquiry opportunities across a range of subjects is restricting pupils' development of future life skills.

### The effectiveness of provision

All staff have worked hard to improve their own practice but inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching, which ranges from good to inadequate. Signs that the high level of professional support is having an effect are evident, and a number of positive moves forward are commonly seen in all lessons. These include the day-to-day planning which sets out each objective much more precisely and which is shared with the pupils. In books, this is evident in the statements written by pupils and in the targets that they are set. Marking is more informative with comments such as 'You have managed to achieve your target and you now need to work on the next step.' Teachers are working more collaboratively to share good ideas and to try and make lessons exciting or developing different teaching styles. One of the school's

aims this term has been to try and take risks rather than playing safe. Where this happens, pupils really do respond and there is often a buzz of anticipation, such as in a singing lesson in preparation for a year group presentation. Behaviour management is improving but still variable in a small number of classes. Teaching assistants are deployed to deal with this and usually divert potential incidents. Whole school assessment information is being used more effectively in classes. Regular pupil progress meetings have been undertaken which is enabling individual teachers to focus support to where it is needed most. The data show that for these pupils it is making a noticeable difference. Pupils' work since the beginning of the school year indicates that more pupils are taking pride in what they produce. Neater and better formed writing is becoming more common although there is still some way to go.

Suitable arrangements for the welfare, support and care of pupils have continued. When pupils feel ill or have an accident they are cared for sympathetically, and at lunchtimes, support staff try and play with the pupils while keeping a watchful eye on what is happening elsewhere. Safeguarding procedures also continue to be conducted according to the latest guidance.

### 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 – satisfactory progress

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

The positive start made by the previous interim headteacher has been continued this term. Some difficult staffing decisions have been handled professionally and the findings from the comprehensive monitoring of teaching and learning are being used to provide further professional development for staff. Continuous monitoring shows that more lessons are at least satisfactory with a higher proportion that is good. Good support continues from advanced skill teachers, and the association with another successful local school is providing teachers with a chance to see some exemplary practice. All teachers know what they need to do to improve their own practice and are acutely aware when this does not happen. Consequently, there is more realism about how far the progress of pupils needs developing and how far the school has to go to overcome its difficulties.

Leadership and management through the school have turned a corner. Senior and middle managers are now able to talk more confidently about strategic decisions that need to be taken and where the remaining weaknesses lie. As a result, they are beginning the process of taking responsibility for improvement and are using their time more wisely. Plans are well advanced to reorganise the leadership and teaching structure to ensure there is strength in all year groups. Governors are also taking a more active role in the strategic decision-making process although this still relies heavily on a small number of governors and information provided by the school or local authority. This is partly due to the high turnover of governors when families are posted to other garrisons or overseas. The appointment of an experienced vice chair of governors is a positive move. The governing body is aware that more expertise is needed in the run-up to the interview process for the new headteacher and so intensive training is being provided in preparation for this. The improvement plans prepared following the inspection in October 2009 have wisely been revised and amended in the light of changing circumstances. Some parts of this plan have been completed although the school's ambition to have all teaching at least satisfactory by this term has not been realised. In addition, the many changes of headteacher have caused uncertainty among the staff and the whole school community. Until this is stabilised the school is unable to show it has the capacity to make all the improvements that are urgently needed.

#### 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 school is still receiving good and intensive support from the local authority. Monitoring, improvement planning and specialist subject support are all conducted in partnership with these external representatives and, at this stage, this is essential to ensure that the pace of change is kept brisk. Since the last visit there has been some work on adjusting the timescale for making improvements but this is in need of further revision to ensure staff can see the success or otherwise of all their hard work.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure stability of leadership through the appointment of a substantive headteacher as soon as possible.
- Fulfil the school's target of all teaching and learning being at least satisfactory and the majority being good by:
  - using accurate assessments, tracking systems and pupil performance information to help plan lessons
  - setting work that provides appropriately challenging and exciting activities.