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Mrs Stephanie Tasker  
Headteacher  
Pinehurst Primary School  
Pinehurst Avenue  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L4 7UF

Dear Mrs Tasker

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pinehurst Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 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 third 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 – 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 the Governing Body 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 third monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 July 2010

### Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.

### Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in March 2010, a new teacher has joined lower Key Stage 2 for part of the summer term on a secondment from another primary school, a teacher has returned from maternity leave and a teacher has left the school. One teacher is currently absent due to sickness and a number of classes continue to be taught by temporary staff. However, from September 2010 plans are in place for all classes to have permanent teachers.

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

Pupils' learning in lessons continues to improve as their enjoyment increases. This is the result of a greater number of planned activities designed to stimulate pupils' interests more effectively. For example, pupils in Year 6 were motivated by a forthcoming visit to a theme park as they developed persuasive text for a leaflet advertising the park. The curiosity of pupils in Year 1 was stimulated as they explored a boy's holiday suitcase and a bag of things for a baby. The desire to learn has been reawakened for some; a girl in Year 5 said 'I love maths' during her work in a small group for those who had experienced difficulties with fractions and coordinates in the class lesson. All the pupils in this group were also keen to do the homework provided. Lessons throughout the school are increasingly characterised by a growth in pupils' confidence and a belief in themselves as competent learners.

The school's data indicate that the progress of many pupils has accelerated rapidly over the course of this year and that their achievement is improving. Some pupils are progressing at a rate more than double that which might be expected. In Year 6, pupils' work in English and mathematics indicates better progress for pupils of all abilities. In particular, their writing shows an improved variety, amount and quality of work. However, pupils' progress continues to be inconsistent throughout the school, particularly in Key Stage 2. To some extent this is due to the number of teachers which some classes have had over the course of this year. However, there are also classes where staffing has been more stable, but where progress has also been inconsistent. While writing continues to be the weaker area overall, in some year groups weaknesses in mathematics and reading also persist. Many pupils who have fallen behind are improving their skills in reading, writing and mathematics, as

well as learning to take turns and to work together in the small groups designed to boost their progress. Where these groups are more effective, the activities are based on misconceptions identified during the class lesson and then taught in the small group. Staff also check that the pupils are applying the skills learned when they return to their class and as a result, the pupils are also consolidating and practising what they have learned more successfully.

Despite the accelerated progress of many, attainment by the end of both Years 2 and 6 remains low, due to the ground which still has to be made up. Fewer pupils than might be expected are reaching the higher levels at the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2.

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 pupil outcomes

Overall attendance levels have improved during this school year, particularly at Key Stage 2. The number of persistent absentees continues to reduce. However, for the small number of persistent absentees now identified, the school is finding their attendance stubbornly hard to improve. The majority of pupils show a greater understanding of the importance of regular school attendance. However, the school has accurately identified that there remains more to do to convince a small minority of parents and carers of the link between regular attendance and raised attainment. Pupils' punctuality is much improved.

In lessons, behaviour continues to improve. The amount of restlessness is reducing as pupils make a swifter and more involved start to their work. Sometimes pupils still find it hard to resist calling out when answering a question, although in part this indicates their enthusiasm. Behaviour on the corridors is generally calmer and more purposeful. Many pupils are increasingly confident about speaking to visitors and in engaging in conversation, for example, about others' work on Picasso. However, there continue to be some occasions when pupils are noisy or a little boisterous. Improving skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as developing self-confidence and better attitudes to work, are starting to enhance pupils' preparation for the future.

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 has improved further since the last monitoring inspection. Indoors, the areas of learning are reflected through more varied and attractive activities and new stimuli have been introduced to foster children's curiosity. For example, children were fascinated as they watched butterflies emerge from chrysalises. Sessions led by adults are more consistently supported by the independent activities which follow. However, resources and activities available to children throughout the day do not build on the focused teaching activity as effectively. Sometimes too, the adult-led activities are insufficiently closely matched to the needs of all the children in the group. As a result, the more able remain insufficiently challenged, while others are unable to sustain their concentration. The outdoor environment is also much improved. The activities set up now reflect the areas of learning and adults intervene more effectively in activities chosen by the children to extend their learning. Despite this, there remains more to do to engage children, particularly the boys, in activities to develop their skills across all of the areas of learning.

The quality of teaching throughout the school continues to improve and there is a growing proportion which is good, especially in Key Stage 1. Teachers' greater confidence means that they are increasingly adjusting the lesson to respond to misunderstandings or to follow pupils' interests. In most lessons, the pace of learning is faster and pupils are becoming more rapidly involved in activities rather than listening to the teacher for too long. Lesson planning is more consistent and all lessons have clear learning objectives shared with the pupils. Success criteria are also introduced at the start of each lesson. However, these vary in their clarity and sometimes pupils remain unclear as to what they have to include in their work to meet them. Where teaching is better, the criteria are written in a language that the pupils understand and, in the best examples, pupils contribute by explaining what they will have to do to succeed in the lesson. Overall, the content of lessons is better matched to meet the needs of all of the pupils in the class and there are increased opportunities for pupils to give their own ideas and views. In most lessons, particularly in Key Stage 1, work is more carefully structured to extend the higher attainers and to provide support for those whose attainment is lower. For example, in a lesson in Key Stage 1, some pupils were able to write fluently after having had a conversation with a classmate, whilst others sequenced pictures and talked to an adult before recording their ideas.

Work is now marked regularly in every class and includes clearer identification to pupils as to what they have done well and what the next steps are for them to improve their work. Also, pupils' books indicate that the pupils are now reading the teachers' comments and responding to them. Where teaching is more effective, time is given for pupils to evaluate their own and others' learning. In some of the better examples of this, pupils give feedback to one another as to how they could improve their work, but this is by no means embedded or consistent. All pupils have targets

in their books for English and mathematics, with indications as to the pupils' current level, their target level and what they have to do to move to the next level. In some books these are now dated and marked off when met, but currently this is not consistent. Pupils' progress towards their longer term targets remains largely unchecked lesson by lesson.

The curriculum is better planned to meet the range of pupils' needs and to build upon their earlier learning. This is contributing to the improvements in pupils' progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT. The small groups, taught by learning support assistants and designed to help those experiencing difficulty in some aspect of their learning, continue to be very well planned. Activities in these groups are targeted precisely to meet each pupil's needs. However, in some year groups, the proportion of pupils who have attended such a group during the year is very high. The school recognises the importance of ensuring there is continuing improvement in mainstream lessons in order to reduce the need for so many small groups. Since the last monitoring inspection, themed approaches have become embedded in curriculum planning. This is giving pupils more scope to use their skills in a wider variety of subjects. For example pupils in Years 1 and 2 used ICT skills when learning about Victorian seaside holidays and those in Year 3 applied their skills in reading, writing and speaking to decide what is important in their lives. Plans for September 2010 involve the inclusion of other subjects, such as art, music and physical education in the school's plans for the whole curriculum. As well as strengthening the links between subjects, the school also recognises the potential of this in extending pupils' experiences of a wider variety of cultures.

The school continues to take good care of its pupils. Increasingly all staff acknowledge their role in raising pupils' attainment and in ensuring that pupils have the best possible opportunities while they are at the school. Consequently, there is a more concerted drive to promote attendance and to ensure that pupils' special educational needs are met. The school continues to know who its most vulnerable pupils are and to keep a close check on their progress.

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 – good
- adapt the curriculum so that it better meets pupils' needs and develops their basic literacy and numeracy skills – good
- ensure that marking and academic guidance consistently help pupils to understand how to improve their work – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a very clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is beginning to be more widely shared by a greater number of staff. This understanding is underpinned

by thorough school self-evaluation which is then used to set new challenges and targets. This drive and rigour is significant in the improvements made to date and in the raising of expectations of all as to what can be achieved. School leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning are very sharp. These skills are being shared more widely and built upon, so that gradually more staff are involved in lesson observations. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching as accountability is increasingly shared. This applies particularly to English and mathematics. However, leadership of the other subjects of the curriculum remains less well developed. Staff are becoming more and more eager to improve their work and to act upon feedback. Leadership of other aspects of the school's work is also becoming increasingly devolved and is starting to make a difference, for example, the monitoring of attendance. There is also improved leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is securing better provision for the children.

Governors continue to provide strong support and challenge. The Chair of the Governing Body knows the school well. Through the inputs of additional governors with backgrounds in education, she is widening her knowledge of work in schools elsewhere. This is contributing to governors' understanding of what can be achieved at Pinehurst. The difficulty of non-quorate meetings identified at the last monitoring inspection has been overcome by some judicious reorganisation of committees.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of school self-evaluation in order to hold leaders, managers and governors to account for improving pupils' achievement – good

### External support

The local authority has a highly accurate view of the school's effectiveness. This is reported in the termly review reports. These are used by the school to identify the next steps in its improvement. The school values the reports and responds to them quickly, so that work has started on areas for improvement identified by the review in June. Good support from a variety of local authority consultants and advanced skills teachers has helped improve literacy, numeracy and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Appropriately, the school is becoming less dependent on external support as it builds better capacity for further improvement. The School Improvement Partner provides regular and helpful monitoring and is instrumental in brokering the support the school needs.

### Priorities for further improvement

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