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5 November 2010

Mrs Chris Wain  
Headteacher  
Abingdon Primary School  
Abingdon Road  
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Teesside  
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Dear Mrs Wain

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Abingdon Primary School**

Following my visit with Ann Wallis, additional inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. 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

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, Families and Learning for Middlesbrough.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2010**

- Raise attainment and improve the progress pupils make in English, mathematics and science, by:
  - improving the management of teaching and learning by leaders at all levels so that teaching enables pupils to learn at a much faster and more consistent pace
  - making sure that planned learning activities meet the individual needs of all pupils
  - ensuring teachers make more effective use of day-to-day information about what pupils have learnt, in order to increase the pace of learning
  - making effective use of enrichment activities to develop pupils' enthusiasm for learning.
- Ensure that safeguarding procedures fully meet government requirements.
- Improve attendance to at least the national average.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Abingdon Primary School**

### **Report from the second monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 November 2010**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 14 lessons. They scrutinised school documents and pupils' books and met with the two headteachers, groups of senior managers, middle managers, staff and pupils, the governing body monitoring group and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since September 2010, Abingdon has entered into a partnership with a local primary school judged outstanding following its Ofsted inspection. The headteacher from this school is sharing the leadership role with Abingdon's deputy headteacher, whose role is currently the 'acting-up' headteacher. Leadership has been further strengthened with the appointment of an additional assistant headteacher to the upper end of Key Stage 2. The school continues to have significant proportions of pupils entering or leaving the school at different times of the year. For example, in September, 36 additional pupils joined established classes. A range of seven different languages is spoken by 26 of them and many of these pupils speak either English as an additional language or little or no English. Until October half term, a senior officer from the local authority has been carrying out the role of the School Improvement Partner. A new partner has been appointed.

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

Scrutiny of pupils' books, evidence from the school's tracking data and lessons observed during the inspection show that all pupils are generally making better progress in their learning; especially some pupils in mathematics. However, leaders and staff are aware that pupils' progress in lessons needs to be faster to tackle the history of low attainment. Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 are rising and, although still below the national average, the gap is narrowing. However, results in English and science were disappointing and dipped in the summer. This is in part due to the turbulence recently experienced by the school and the school's stronger focus on improving mathematics and attendance. The school is taking similar action to that taken in mathematics to tackle English. Actions include good interventions, challenge and support from the local authority. The school is aware that significant improvement in the science curriculum is needed in order to raise standards and is tackling this effectively through leadership and support from the partner school's science teacher. Nevertheless, there has been some improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels and the school nearly met its target for the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 or above in English and mathematics combined. Local authority data show that all groups of Year 6 pupils in 2010 made

at least satisfactory progress in English and mathematics given their low attainment on entry into Key Stage 2.

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

- Raise attainment and improve the progress pupils make in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Pupils' behaviour remains consistently good in classes, as they move around the school and in the outside spaces. Behaviour management strategies are clear and well applied, including consistency in the system of rewards and sanctions. Pupils say they particularly value the recently developed system of rewarding good attainment and progress in lessons. Pupils spoken to say they feel very safe and effective actions are secured to keep them safe. The school remains a harmonious and inclusive multicultural community, where pupils say their views are valued. They speak confidently to adults and visitors, are polite and considerate of others and it is clear that they try hard in class. Attitudes to learning are good and when teaching is good and teachers are enthusiastic it makes a great difference to pupils' engagement and enjoyment in lessons. In satisfactory lessons pupils remain well behaved but they become more passive. Pupils say they enjoy school and this is seen in their improved attendance. Attendance has risen well since the time of the inspection when it was below average. It is now above average. The number of pupils who are absent for long periods is low and falling. Successful strategies developed include the judicious timing of staff development and training days, the effective use of first-day response and the use of attendance rewards, which pupils value highly.

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

- Improve attendance to at least the national average – good

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Good, developing collaboration with staff from the partner school, including joint professional development sessions, has continued to 'raise the bar' and understanding of what is good or better teaching and all are learning from good practice. The proportion of good teaching continues to increase and no inadequate lessons were seen during the inspection. However, there is still not enough good or better teaching to ensure that all pupils make the best possible progress in lessons or to ensure the history of underachievement in the school is fully tackled. Nevertheless, pupils' progress in lessons is more secure because of improvements in the quality of teaching and in planning. Pupils are clearly told what they are expected to learn and how to go about it at the beginning of lessons. As yet, not all teachers are consistent in reminding pupils throughout the lesson of their learning objective and this hinders progress for some. Leaders' current key focus for

improvement is to ensure teachers use pupil-assessment information to inform pupils' next steps more successfully. Assessment and tracking procedures have improved, are robust and providing teachers, leaders and managers with a much clearer, more regular picture of pupils' progress. Pupil progress meetings are developing to hold staff more successfully to account for their pupils' achievements and to take action to tackle any identified underachievement quickly, but these are in the early stages of development and have yet to show impact.

More teachers are providing different work for groups of pupils in lessons but they are not all using information about pupils' current levels of understanding to ensure the different work is pitched well enough to the varying abilities of their pupils. Similarly, while marking has clearly improved and more information is provided for pupils to recognise what they are doing well and what they need to improve, not all teachers are fully complying with the school's marking policy. Success is evident where pupils are invited to be 'peer assessors', as in Year 2, when pupils assessed each others' ability to use descriptive words in their work. Where teaching is good, teaching assistants are generally well deployed and proactive in supporting those identified with particular needs. This ensures these pupils remain 'on-task' and make similar progress to their peers. However, this is not always the case in some satisfactory lessons where assistants spend too much time waiting to be deployed.

The school continues to provide a good range of well-attended enrichment activities and pupils speak positively about visitors to school, visits out of school and the exciting summer school. The school is developing strategies to link the impact of the enrichment activities on pupils' learning and progress but these are in the early stages of development. However, analysis of one-to-one support for targeted pupils is showing positive impact in their attitudes and learning in class. Pupils report how their fun information and communication technology (ICT) experiences in the summer school have developed their enthusiasm for learning in that subject. This was evident in an ICT lesson observed during the inspection.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Since the last visit, the new leaders, alongside local authority support and intervention and the partnership arrangements with the local primary school, have assured a sharper focus on learning and a sense of urgency in driving improvement across the school. Leaders have worked effectively to ensure a much more consistent approach to teaching and planning as a result of focused coaching, support and the sharing of good practice through joint professional development days with the partner school. All staff speak of this clearer focus and morale is high. Regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching, through observation, identify strengths and weaknesses of lessons. Evaluations show that the quality of teaching is improving and around half is now judged good; this is an improvement. However, evaluation of teaching does not always identify how successfully teaching is meeting the individual needs of pupils within classes. This has hampered pupils' faster progress in some lessons. Leaders are tightening monitoring arrangements to tackle

this weakness. Middle managers say they have much more clarity about their roles, and are beginning to develop their leadership roles in terms of tackling whole-school improvement priorities and holding their teams to account for the impact of their work on pupils' progress through pupil progress meetings. They accept that their contributions to this wider work are still in the early stages of development. For example, they acknowledge they have yet to be fully involved in the school's self-evaluation processes and its improvement planning which have been developed following the last monitoring inspection. The school improvement plan successfully identifies key objectives and actions to tackle the areas identified for improvement at the time of the inspection. Accountability arrangements are not as strong as there are few specific, time-limited, measurable targets. This means it is difficult to see how managers will hold staff to account for those actions and the improvement required in pupils' standards and progress. Following the inspection in February, the school and local authority took urgent and decisive action to tackle weaknesses in safeguarding procedures. By the time of the first monitoring inspection, procedures fully met requirements and they continue to do so.

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

- Ensure that safeguarding procedures fully meet government requirements – satisfactory

### **External support**

The quality of external support from the local authority remains strong. It is intensive, well focused and valued by all leaders including members of the governing body and has contributed to the improvements in the quality of teaching and the progress pupils are now making in lessons. Good progress against their statement for action is evident through the regular monitoring reports to the governing body's monitoring group. Key local authority personnel, including the interim School Improvement Partner, have worked well with the school to make sure that the school's improvement plan and the local authority's statement of action are aligned. They are now working with leaders to ensure the improvement plan can hold teachers to account more effectively for the impact of their work on pupils learning and progress. Honest and evaluative School Improvement Partner reports to the governing body's monitoring group is helping them to carry out their role in challenging school leaders in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the time of the inspection more effectively. All governors continue to develop their skills and competencies, through training and development. The addition of 'parent champions' to the monitoring group has not only strengthened the partnership with parents but provided an additional dimension of scrutiny, as members of the group have their own action plan which is monitored regularly.