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16 December 2010

Mrs J Edwards  
Headteacher  
Germander Park School  
1 Germander Place  
Conniburrow  
Milton Keynes  
MK14 7DU

Dear Mrs Edwards

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Germander Park School**

Following my visit to your school on 8 December 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2009. 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Milton Keynes.

Yours sincerely

Peter Callow  
**Additional inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2009:**

- Raise pupils' attainment, especially in reading and writing, by improving the quality of teaching and assessment in Years 1 and 2 by:
  - increasing the pace and demand of lessons
  - establishing a closer match of work to pupils' individual abilities
  - using probing questions to deepen understanding and stimulate discussion
  - promoting the enjoyment of books and literature
  - ensuring consistent approaches to teaching and learning.
  
- Eliminate poor behaviour and low-level disruption to learning in Years 1 and 2 by ensuring teachers set and maintain consistent expectations for work and play.
  
- Build the school's capacity to improve by ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of their roles as leaders and managers, and assess their performance against the targets set in the school's 'Raising Attainment Plan'.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Germander Park School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 8 December 2010**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed six lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, pupils, the chair of the governing body, a parent governor and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

A new teacher was appointed to the Year 1 class in September 2010. This enabled the previous teacher to move up with her class into Year 2 in order to provide continuity for a cohort of pupils who had experienced a significant number of staff changes since joining the school. The Year 2 teacher took on an additional Reception class, which was caused by the increase in numbers of children joining the Early Years Foundation Stage; now, 43 children are split into two parallel classes.

The number of pupils joining the school other than at the normal time at the start of the year is also increasing and a high proportion of these are at a very early stage of speaking English as an additional language or have no spoken English when they join the school.

The governing body now has a full complement, including three recently recruited parent governors. There has been no further discussion with the local authority on possible school reorganisation in the area. A parent champion has been appointed to help the school to liaise with parents and seek their views.

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

Pupils' attainment when leaving in Year 2 in 2010 was well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, and with writing continuing to be the weakest subject. Boys performed significantly less well than girls in all subjects and no pupils reached the highest level. The picture of very low attainment, not only in Year 2 but also in Year 1, masked the increase in progress that pupils had begun to make towards the end of the year because of better teaching.

Progress has accelerated rapidly since September and assessments made at the end of November show good or better progress being made in writing, as well as in reading and mathematics. The progress of boys is similar to that of girls. As a result of this improved progress, the school's current data indicate that the majority of pupils are on track to meet the levels expected for their age by July 2011. Nonetheless, despite a continued focus on raising attainment for more able pupils,

this group is still not being challenged sufficiently to reach the higher levels of which they are capable.

Pupils' accelerated progress reflects a much more positive approach to, and interest in, their learning. This stems from a purposeful atmosphere across the school which encourages pupils to settle to their work, to apply themselves to a range of interesting activities and to see that learning can be rewarding and fun. This ethos particularly helps newly arrived pupils to settle quickly and make very quick gains in their basic skills. There are a variety of support strategies in place not only to help this group of pupils but those with particular needs in reading, writing or mathematics. These are having a positive impact on both their attainment and progress so, for example, the reading age of one child on the Reading Recovery programme has increased by over a year in just three months of this term.

A review of pupils' books shows that the focus on presentation and handwriting is having a positive impact. Books are tidy and generally work is well presented with clear and legible handwriting. The content of pupils' writing is improving and older pupils are writing more at length. Spelling is also improving and shows the extent to which pupils are beginning to assimilate their knowledge of sounds and letters and use it in their independent work.

A recent review of the marking policy has resulted in a more consistent approach, particularly with regard for the need for pupils to have time to discuss and reflect on both oral and written feedback. The full impact of this review has yet to be seen in terms of ensuring that pupils always act on the advice given.

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

- Raise pupils' attainment, especially in reading and writing and in Years 1 and 2 – good.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Higher expectations and a better pace to lessons are significant factors that have led to much-improved behaviour. There is very little disruption to learning. In addition, the work that has been done in assemblies and in circle time, to encourage pupils to respect each other and to be aware of the impact their own behaviour has on the well-being and learning of others, is very evident. Pupils are spending less time listening to the teacher at the start of lessons and they move more quickly onto independent tasks. They also enjoy working with a learning partner, which helps to keep pupils motivated. Since the last visit, teachers are making better use of interactive whiteboards and visualisers to help pupils to learn in different ways and become more engaged in their work.

Despite freezing weather conditions, pupils were observed safely and happily playing outside and cooperating well with each other in a variety of games. Pupils say they

enjoy coming to school and attendance, since September, reflects this. An improving trend is supported by rigorous action by the school to ensure that parents are aware of regular and punctual attendance. Good links with parents have been strengthened by the appointment of a parent champion. An initial questionnaire in November showed that the overwhelming majority of parents/carers are happy with the school.

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

- Eliminate poor behaviour and low-level disruption to learning in Years 1 and 2 by ensuring teachers set and maintain consistent expectations for work and play – good.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

Better quality teaching, as evident in lessons and from pupils' books, has had a demonstrable effect on raising attainment and accelerating the progress of pupils. Teachers have responded positively to the areas of improvement identified at the last visit so that, for example, lessons move at a brisker pace. Teachers ensure that different questions are posed to meet the varying needs and abilities of pupils and all pupils are expected to make a response. In addition, teachers are starting to assess pupils' understanding and progress more frequently in lessons and move them on quickly to the next stage in their learning.

The use of learning partners is proving to be a helpful strategy in the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills, which supports both their reading and writing. Its effectiveness, however, is occasionally limited by a lack of modelling by the teacher of the sorts of questions that might be posed in discussion and the answers that could be expected. Teachers' planning and the lessons themselves clearly set out the learning intentions and success criteria for the different groups of pupils. Despite this, insufficient challenge often remains for the most able so that particularly in whole-class activities they have to do work which is too easy.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and newly arrived pupils get good support, including from teaching assistants, enabling them to make good or better progress. However, overall, teaching assistants aren't sufficiently aware of the needs of all pupils in the class and how to respond to them.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Years 1 and 2 by: increasing the pace and demand of lessons; establishing a closer match of work to pupils' individual abilities; using probing questions to deepen understanding and stimulate discussion – good.

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

A calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils are expected to achieve as well as they can is the result of the headteacher's expectation and vision. She is well

supported by other leaders, including governors, raising expectations within the school community. She is driving the school improvement plan strongly, successfully focusing on those aspects of teaching and learning which will raise attainment and improve pupils' progress. The two senior teachers have been empowered to take on a greater leadership role, particularly by monitoring and evaluating their core subject areas of English and mathematics. In particular, they are effectively using lesson observations and scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work to prioritise actions in their subject improvement plans. They have an increased understanding of pupil data across the school but recognise they now need to use it in order to support teachers in more accurately assessing gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills and what the next steps in learning are.

The increased numbers of governors, combined with their developing skills in holding the school to account for pupils' performance, are helping to build their effectiveness as a governing body. The chair of governors' deep commitment to the school and the local community ensures that every opportunity is explored to strengthen links with parents.

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

- Build the school's capacity to improve by ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of their roles as leaders and managers, and assess their performance against the targets set in the school's 'Raising Attainment Plan' – good.

### **External support**

Through the regular meetings of the Target Intervention Board the local authority has rightly evaluated the school's growing capacity for improvement within its own resources. As a result, it has gradually reduced its support but responds effectively when required to the headteacher, staff or governing body.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

There are no additional priorities for further improvement. The school should continue to work on those areas already identified within its school improvement plan.