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Mrs G Gillett
The Headteacher
Southmead School
Wrafton Road
Braunton
Devon
EX33 2BU

Dear Mrs Gillett

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Southmead School

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 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 Devon.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Southmead School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 December 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, pupils and parent representatives.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, there have been further significant changes to staffing. Two members of staff have returned from maternity leave, the deputy headteacher resigned and left the school at the end of the summer term and another full-time teacher will be leaving the school at the end of the year.

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

The school's monitoring of pupils' learning and progress is now fully embedded and provides leaders with regular progress information about individual pupils and groups. Ambitious targets set by the school aim towards closing the gap between the school and national averages. Class teachers set high expectations for all pupils and, combined with their close monitoring of individual pupils, progress in reading, writing and mathematics is focused and effective in raising pupils' attainments. Consequently, the 2010 end of Key Stage 2 assessment results show pupils' attainment is now broadly average. The consistently good teaching provided in Key Stage 1 enables more pupils to make good progress in their learning so that they too achieve more in line with national expectations.

The most recent school assessments indicate that pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities are not making the desired progress in their learning that teachers would like them to make. As a result, the school is reviewing provision accordingly to enable more pupils to progress at similar rates to their peers.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning, especially when lessons are carefully planned and cater for pupils' individual needs and interests. Pupils are polite to one another, staff and visitors. They are proud of their school and the increasing opportunities within the curriculum to make learning more interesting. Behaviour is consistently good in and around the school.

The school regards its pastoral duties and responsibilities for all pupils as a priority and adopts recommended good practice across all areas to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. The rigorous monitoring of pupils' attendance has paid dividends in recent months and attendance is currently above average. This is because of the rigorous,

yet supportive, monitoring of pupils' attendance and the very good partnership work the school has developed with support agencies.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 is overall satisfactory and improving with many good elements. Teachers now use the good assessment information more effectively to plan lessons that more closely provide for the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. In the best lessons seen, teaching is brisk and strategies are used that keep pupils engaged in learning, often through providing them with regular opportunities to talk about and reflect on their learning. The best lessons provide activities for pupils to experiment with, as well as consolidate, their learning. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils were provided with a variety of practical activities that not only engaged their interest but enabled them to consolidate their understanding of counting in twos.

Where learning is less secure, activities provided by the teacher are not sufficiently tailored for pupils' individual learning needs. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities for pupils to actively participate during the taught part of a lesson and so they remain too passive.

Exciting plans are being developed to provide a curriculum that will more closely cater for the interests and learning needs of pupils. As well as ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to develop their basic skills, the school works closely with the nearby Royal Marine base, Chivenor to investigate ways in which together they can enhance pupils' personal and emotional development.

Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and, as a result, provide effective support for individual pupils and groups. They are provided with regular training, are well managed and deployed wisely to maximise pupils' learning and progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Under the secure and confident leadership of the headteacher, pupils' overall achievement and the extent to which the pupils enjoy their learning continue to improve. The end-of-year 2010 assessments demonstrate a secure improvement in reading, writing and mathematics for most year groups. This is because the school has established robust processes to check the on-going progress of individuals and groups of pupils and now uses this information to set challenging performance targets. In addition, senior leaders have become more confident in the exercising of their leadership roles and in providing clear direction and focus on school improvement issues. The governing body, as a result, is better informed and enabled to provide a more strategic direction for the school and fulfil its statutory duties with greater confidence. Leaders have worked successfully in establishing partnerships with parents, carers and other agencies in order to meet the varying needs of individual pupils and their families. For example, the innovative use of resources to

provide a café for the use of families and the wider community was successfully completed in the summer.

External support

The continuing support offered to the school by the local authority and School Improvement Partner continues to be of benefit. Through good communications and a genuine sense of partnership, an exit strategy has been agreed to monitor the reduction in the level of support provided to the school without jeopardising pupils' entitlement to high-quality learning.

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009

- Improve pupils' achievement and raise standards in English, mathematics and science by:
 - establishing robust processes to check the ongoing progress of individuals and groups of pupils and use information gathered to set challenging performance targets
 - ensure that targets and assessment of pupils' progress are used to inform teaching so that it is well matched to the needs of all pupils
 - improve the quality of lessons to provide stimulating activities that engage and challenge all pupils and ensure that time is used effectively both in whole-class and small group sessions.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by:
 - developing more rigorous procedures and processes for self-evaluation, particularly focusing on pupils' performance
 - ensuring that all subject leaders, especially for English and mathematics, have the support, skills and opportunities to monitor and improve the quality of learning
 - ensuring that governors are kept well informed, enabling them to provide effective support and challenge to the school and fulfil their statutory duties.