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31 March 2011

Mrs P Dosanjh  
Acting Headteacher  
Alvaston Junior School  
Elvaston Lane  
Alvaston  
Derby  
DE24 0PU

Dear Mrs Dosanjh

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Alvaston Junior School**

Following my visit to your school on 29–30 March 2011, 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 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 – good.

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 Derby.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress by raising teachers' expectations of pupils' learning by ensuring that:
  - the outcomes of assessment are used consistently in all planning so that pupils' work is better matched to their different levels of ability
  - the teaching of writing includes more opportunities for pupils to write freely and to practise writing at length more frequently
  - the teaching of mathematics gives pupils more opportunities to use their skills to solve real-life problems
  - marking shows pupils what they have to do to improve their work, and teachers give pupils time to respond to their marking
  - writing, mathematical and ICT skills are promoted effectively in different subjects.
  
- Introduce rigour into the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work, and especially of teaching and learning, by:
  - establishing a whole-school view of what good teaching, learning, leadership and management look like and taking steps to ensure all staff come up to the raised expectations
  - making teachers more accountable for their part in accelerating pupils' progress in all year groups, in order to raise standards in Year 6
  - increasing the role of the governors in holding the school to account for its pupils' outcomes.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Alvaston Junior School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 29–30 March 2011**

#### **Evidence**

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

#### **Context**

The substantive headteacher continues to be absent from the school through illness and the deputy headteacher remains as acting headteacher. Three teachers are currently on long-term absence through illness. Their teaching commitments are covered by two supply teachers and class reorganisation. Since the last monitoring inspection, the governing body agreed to a request by one of the senior leaders to be relieved of her leadership post. Another teacher from within the current staff has been appointed on a temporary contract to fulfil this leadership role.

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

Pupils enjoy their learning and are happy in lessons. They feel that their progress is accelerating and this is supported by the school's tracking information and work in pupils' books. Pupils' progress in all year groups has improved significantly and, as a result, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are higher than at any time since the school was placed into special measures. However, due to the legacy of underachievement, many pupils still have weaknesses in some of the basic skills in literacy and numeracy. While pupils' progress is still slower in writing than it is in reading and mathematics, greater attention to structuring pupils' learning in writing is starting to have a positive impact. Pupils are increasingly keen to talk about their ideas or demonstrate their knowledge and understanding, and are beginning to take greater responsibility for improving their own work.

#### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Pupils are keen to learn, and their steady and diligent attention to their work is a marked feature of most lessons and makes a strong contribution to their daily progress. They are keen to share their successes and talk about what they are learning. Pupils are polite and courteous. Although pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually good, there are instances of undisciplined behaviour of a few pupils around school over the lunchtime period.

#### **The effectiveness of provision**

Work by senior leaders and the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and raise teachers' expectations of pupils' learning is having a positive impact. Although inadequate teaching has not been completely eradicated, and some teaching was not observed because of staff absence, the quality of teaching is significantly better than observed on previous monitoring inspections. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong. Teachers manage classes effectively to help ensure that lessons are calm and orderly. Staff training has helped teachers to have a better understanding of how to assess pupils' work against National Curriculum levels and to use this knowledge to provide more effective challenge for pupils in lessons. Reorganisation of the enhanced resource provision and more focused intervention strategies are having a positive impact on improving the quality of learning for many pupils, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

In nearly all classes, teachers' marking has improved and is now more related to pupils' learning in lessons. Teachers' marking comments more clearly identify what pupils need to do to improve, and many pupils are now provided with opportunities to reflect upon the marking and improve their work. Although the school has worked hard to ensure that teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn in lessons and guide pupils through small learning steps, this is not embedded. In those lessons where pupils' learning is good, these aspects are clearly evident and, in addition, teachers match pupils' work to pupils' different levels of attainment and regularly check on their learning. A greater proportion of pupils know their learning targets, but this is inconsistent across the school.

Many teachers are beginning to help pupils improve their mathematical skills by asking them to solve real-life problems, such as calculating shopping bills and working out any change they may receive. Teachers now provide pupils with more opportunities to write freely and at length in lessons other than literacy. In a few classes, these opportunities are planned carefully so that the writing skills reinforce those learned in literacy lessons. Because of the urgent need to improve the quality of teaching, the school has focused less on helping teachers to develop pupils' mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in different subjects. Consequently, there has been little improvement in these areas.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress by raising teachers' expectations of pupils' learning – good

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

Rising pupils' attainment and accelerating progress are mainly due to senior leaders' endeavour to improve their own leadership skills, understand what makes effective teaching and relentlessly tackle the causes of pupils' underachievement. To enable them to do this, the local authority provides clear guidance and strong support. Senior leaders have built effectively on previous improvements and have continued

to add rigour to the school's monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems. Half-termly pupils' progress meetings between the acting headteacher and all teachers are rigorously undertaken. Teachers are held to account for pupils' achievement and the causes of any inadequate progress are discussed and actions for improvement identified. Regular monitoring of the quality of pupils' learning through lesson observations, discussions with pupils and the monitoring of pupils' progress data and teachers' planning, have helped reinforce the urgency for improvement and raise teachers' expectations. The governing body is more knowledgeable about its role in holding the school to account and more governors are gaining first-hand knowledge of the school through visiting lessons, meeting with staff and working with pupils.

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

- Introduce rigour into the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work, and especially of teaching and learning – good

### **External support**

The local authority school improvement partner continues to maintain a high level of support to the school. She provides very clear guidance to senior leaders and the governing body, organises additional consultancy support and carefully monitors the school's progress. The Chair of the Governing Body and senior leaders are appreciative of the support and guidance received.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

There are no priorities for further improvement. The urgency remains to increase the proportion of consistently good teaching and eradicate all teaching that is inadequate.