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Jacqui Grace  
Interim headteacher  
Ham Dingle Primary School  
Old Ham Lane  
Stourbridge  
DY9 0UN

Dear Mrs Grace

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Ham Dingle Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 17–18 May 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2015. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

### **Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.**

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. This is subject to prior consultation with Her Majesty's Inspector.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the chair of the interim executive board, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Dudley.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Bellworthy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2015**

- Leaders and governors should ensure that safeguarding is effective, including in early years, by:
  - meeting all statutory duties related to recruitment policies and procedures
  - maintaining systematic and organised records related to the safeguarding and welfare of pupils
  - developing a culture of safeguarding throughout the school so that pupils' welfare and safety are paramount
  - providing up-to-date training so that all staff and governors are aware of the latest safeguarding guidance, including that related to tackling extremism and preventing radicalisation
  - governors checking that leaders fulfil all their statutory responsibilities and that policies for behaviour, safeguarding and child protection meet requirements.
  
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
  - there is a shared view of the future direction of the school among leaders, governors and the wider school community
  - roles and responsibilities of leaders and governors are clear and understood
  - governors hold leaders to account more effectively for the performance of the school
  - monitoring of teaching is effective in tackling weak teaching and leads to improvements
  - outcomes for pupils in the full range of subjects are analysed in a way that identifies quickly and clearly where intervention is required to stop pupils falling further behind.
  
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment and accelerate pupils' progress so that this is consistently good by making sure that:
  - expectations are high for all pupils, including the most able
  - teachers' subject knowledge in literacy and numeracy is always good
  - teachers' feedback to pupils, including marking, gives them a clear idea of how they are doing and how they could improve their work.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the first monitoring inspection on 17–18 May 2016**

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, the work of the school was seen in action, documents were scrutinised and teaching was observed in all classes. The majority of teaching was jointly observed with the interim headteacher or the deputy headteacher. The inspector spoke with parents at the beginning of both days and spoke with pupils during lessons and at playtimes. Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, representatives from the local authority and the interim executive board.

### **Context**

Since the full inspection in November 2015, the headteacher and two teachers have left the school. An interim headteacher was appointed and the two teachers have been replaced internally. The governing body was dismissed by the local authority and an interim executive board has been appointed.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

The school's current assessment information shows that pupils' skills have steadily improved in this academic year. The progress for most pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is at least in line with the progress the school expects. School information, pupils' workbooks and inspection evidence show that pupils in all year groups are progressing at a similar rate. Where the teaching is stronger and the expectations of learning for all groups are higher, pupils' skills are developing faster. Leaders have ensured the school's assessment system is now used more effectively, as a result of staff training and a greater focus on both individual pupils' progress and the ability to analyse trends across subjects and pupil groups. Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils in the school. The school's latest assessment information shows that the progress gap between those pupils who have special educational needs and other pupils in the school has closed for mathematics and is closing in writing. However, the progress rates in reading have remained the same, meaning that the gap between pupils who have special educational needs and other pupils in the school is not closing. Leaders are aware of this and say part of the reason may be the greater teaching focus on writing and mathematics. As a result, they have recently introduced new reading strategies for all pupils and additional reading support for those pupils who require it. It is too early to measure the impact of these initiatives. There are no pupils with disability in the school. The most-able pupils are progressing broadly in line with expectations, but leaders agree there is room for this group to have their needs met more closely. Leaders are planning staff training to further focus on meeting the needs of this group. Parents are kept well

informed about their child's progress through termly meetings and 'pop-ins' where parents are invited to see their child learning. Strong leadership from the interim headteacher and the interim executive board and typically better teaching are leading to improving pupil outcomes.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is stronger where teachers have higher expectations of pupils' learning and conduct. In these classes, pupils are making better progress and developing their skills well in core subjects, as well as other subjects such as sport. As a result of training, leaders and most teachers are using assessment more effectively. Pupils' workbooks demonstrate progress in reading, writing and mathematics, although this is stronger where the teaching is better. Pupils have responded particularly well to the school's new marking and feedback policy. They were eager to tell the inspector about the effort grades they receive from teachers. There was strong evidence in pupils' workbooks that this policy is working well, as a result of pupils' responses to teachers' marking and feedback. Teachers' application of the policy varies slightly between classes, for example in the way 'gap tasks' or 'next steps' are used. Teachers' expectations of the presentation of pupils' work seen in some workbooks are not always high enough.

Observations of teaching during the inspection showed that productive relationships exist in the classrooms and that most pupils' needs are met. In classes where there was a greater challenge, the pupils were more engaged and making faster progress. Leaders are aware that further work and checks are needed to improve the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Pupils enjoy coming to school as it is a happy place with a positive atmosphere throughout. Pupils say they like the new marking and feedback system because it helps you to 'know how well you are doing'. Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe at school because the daily registers tell us who is here, regular practices remind us what to do in case of a fire and the new fencing helps to keep us secure. Pupils' conduct and behaviour is a strength of the school and pupils say that any poor behaviour is well managed. This view is supported by the school's behaviour records and generally supported by observations of teaching. Where staff expectations of learning are higher, behaviour problems are rare. Where staff expectations are occasionally lower, some low-level behaviour issues persist, especially if they are not quickly dealt with.

Teaching assistants are used effectively to lead a range of additional support sessions for pupils with special educational needs, as well as those who need extra help. As a result of this work and teachers meeting most of their needs, this group

of pupils are progressing well in writing and mathematics. The special educational needs coordinator is aware that further work is needed to ensure this provision for this group continues to develop, to improve their reading skills in particular.

The designated child protection officer works hard to make sure vulnerable pupils are kept safe and the right adults are kept fully informed. As a result of much-improved recording systems and staff training, he is well supported by teachers, teaching assistants and the office staff. The office manager and business manager have both been supported by leaders to put robust systems in place to ensure training, policies and records are kept up to date. The office staff check visitors' identification on arrival and provide a comprehensive information leaflet about the school's updated safeguarding procedures. Different coloured lanyards are issued to visitors, according to whether the visitor has a current Disclosure and Barring Service clearance or not. The school's single central record of all checks made on staff did not meet statutory requirements at the last inspection. This has now been rectified and the single central record is thorough and up to date, as a result of the school's successful drive to improve the culture of safeguarding in the school.

Whole-school attendance is analysed carefully and has remained above the national average this academic year. However, the attendance of some individuals who are persistently absent and girls who qualify for the pupil premium funding has fallen. Leaders are aware that further monitoring of attendance and work with affected families is required to improve attendance for these individuals and reduce persistent absence.

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

The interim executive board and interim headteacher have stabilised the school and gained the trust of pupils, staff and parents in a short space of time. The interim headteacher has ensured that safeguarding has been rapidly transformed from a weakness to a strength of the school. The interim headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked together well to improve teachers' confidence and lead improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. Staff feel trusted, morale has improved and they strongly believe that the school is getting better. They are given opportunities to develop their skills and responsibilities, such as mentoring new staff and leading staff training to improve aspects of teaching. Systems have been put in place to improve teaching, checks on progress, record-keeping and parental engagement. Leaders' roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined and the leadership structure is shared on the school's website.

The interim executive board has played a vital part in steering the school in the right direction following the resignation of the previous headteacher and the dismissal of the governing body. They quickly organised external audits of safeguarding, health and safety, which led to rapid improvements in record-keeping and security. The interim executive board meets regularly and continues to hold the interim

headteacher firmly to account in leading the school's progress towards the removal of special measures. The chair of the interim executive board has used his position and experience to support and challenge the school effectively since the previous inspection.

Parents are very supportive of the interim headteacher and the changes that have been introduced, such as whole-class teaching rather than sets in literacy and mathematics. They feel the interim headteacher is approachable and are pleased with the improvements that have been made to improve security and safeguarding. Transparent leadership through meetings with parents and adding reports to the school's website has kept parents fully informed of developments and the outcome of local authority visits.

Leaders have started to work on a shared vision of the future direction of the school and have plans to further develop this important aspect. Some middle leaders are relatively inexperienced but show the enthusiasm to be an important part of the school's future. Some middle leaders are undertaking training and senior leaders are aware that further work is required to enhance this group's skills and enable them to be more effective. Assessment information is collected half-termly and patterns are analysed by senior leaders. Leaders do not quickly share assessment patterns (gaps widening between some pupil groups in reading, for example) with other teachers, meaning not all staff are currently aware of whole-school pupil progress trends.

### **External support**

Dudley local authority have provided rapid and effective support to the school. Shortly after the publication of the full inspection report in December, they met with parents and staff, replaced the governing body with an interim executive board and secured the appointment of an interim headteacher to start at the beginning of January. One of the members of the interim executive board is a local authority representative, which has enabled Dudley local authority to maintain up-to-date knowledge of the school's progress. Local authority officers have completed two full monitoring visits since the previous inspection. Local authority English, mathematics and early years advisers have worked with school staff, although it is too early to fully assess the impact of this work. Local authority officers played an important role in providing stability to the school and continue to check the school is on the right track.