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13 May 2005

Mrs V Stevens  
Headteacher  
Hinguar Primary School  
Hinguar Street  
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SS3 9AN

Dear Mrs Stevens

### **Implementation of Hinguar Primary School's Action Plan**

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 May 2005, I write to confirm the findings and to notify you of the outcomes.

As you know, the inspection was part of a policy involving a broader series of visits by HMI and Additional Inspectors to check on the development and improvement of schools which have been designated by their section 10 inspection as having serious weaknesses. You will recall that the focus of the inspection was to assess: the quality of the action plan; the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the serious weaknesses.

During the visit I inspected 11 part lessons; attended a registration period and one assembly; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with you and nominated staff on the areas for improvement identified in the section 10 inspection. I also examined a range of pupils' work and spoke informally with other staff and pupils.

On the basis of the evidence gathered during the visit, I made the following observations to you, your deputy headteacher, the chair of the school's governing body and the senior primary adviser and the school's link adviser from the LEA.

Standards of attainment remain, overall, low. In lessons individual pupils in many classes displayed a capability for attainment appropriate to their age; for example in handwriting in a reception class, a clear explanation of classification by a pupil in Year 2, and fluent and expressive reading by an older pupil in Key Stage 2. However, pupils' attainment was rarely above that expected for their ages. Pupils in the middle part of the school lacked confidence in describing and making

comparisons, and older pupils had unhelpful gaps in their knowledge and basic skills.

The school's improving use of data is enabling projections of pupils' attainment at the ends of the key stages. The progress of pupils in Years 2 and 6 reflects sound teaching and other arrangements to boost their National Curriculum attainment. The data suggest that the recent fall in attainment in Key Stage 1 is being controlled. For Key Stage 2, they suggest that results may show a further rise, including in the proportions of pupils achieving Level 5 in mathematics and in science. Nevertheless, the overall attainment of the pupils in Year 6 in English is likely to fall well short of the school's target.

In lessons, the attainment of the pupils and the progress they made varied significantly from class to class. In the Foundation Stage, good progress was made by most where the pupils' self-chosen activities were complemented by adult stimulation that broadened and deepened their engagement. Where the role of the adults was concerned more with supervision and recording, the pupils' progress was restricted by lack of such challenge, and was unsatisfactory.

Good learning occurred in individual lessons in each of the key stages. Pupils in Year 3 consolidated a widening range of historical skills in stimulating work on the Tudors. In a Year 2 class, pupils had a strong commitment to learning including: close engagement in their immediate activities; reflective attitudes to their recent work; a willingness to share and to collaborate with each other and with their teacher; and strong motivation to learn and to contribute to broader objectives for their class. The pupils' progress and the quality of learning provided by the school were, nevertheless, varied. Although good or better in five of the lessons they were unsatisfactory in three others, one in each key stage.

The pupils' behaviour and attitudes were in the main good. The pupils moved responsibly about the school with only occasional and readily defused boisterousness. In the main, they showed care for their property and that of others, and they treated each other and adults with appropriate courtesy. In lessons, pupils' sound personal development was usually helpful. Their behaviour and attitudes were at least satisfactory in each of the lessons and in eight of the lessons they were good or, in one instance in Key Stage 1, very good. Attendance has fallen a little below that reported in the autumn term as a result of poor attendance by a small number of individual pupils.

Substantial changes are being made to improve the quality of education. The curriculum is broad and has reasonable balance, and has been augmented by growing attention to the role of information and communication technology (ICT), visits and visitors. The daily pattern of lessons now includes a session each morning focused on basic skills, though there is scope for further rationalisation of this and related features in the timetables of some classes. The teachers' curriculum planning is receiving helpful attention. The pattern and length of the school day is being revised to provide more time for Key Stage 2. A new school

policy is directing teachers' long and medium term planning. With notable exceptions however, there is not sufficient rigour in teachers' planning for daily work and for individual lessons. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are establishing higher professional expectations about the use of assessment and short-term planning. Helpful systems are being introduced for the collation of data about the pupils' attainments. National Curriculum assessment is being emphasised in policy development, staff training activities and subject leaders' work. The school's new systems are already providing helpful information for the staff, but this is not yet being used enough in the planning of pupils' work.

The quality of teaching is at this stage widely varied, and a significant proportion of it is unsatisfactory. It was at least satisfactory in nine of the lessons, including five of them in which it was good or in one instance excellent. The good lessons illustrated many sound features including: good subject knowledge and professional skills; sound relationships and good control of discipline; stimulating use of resources; a helpful sharing of learning objectives; appropriately high expectations and their successful translation into demands and challenges through steady, systematic and stimulating use of spoken language and questions; close attention to the use of time and the creation of a brisk pace of work; skilful variation of stimulus or activity to meet the varying and diverse needs across classes.

In the two unsatisfactory lessons, learning was adversely affected by a lack of stimulating interaction between the teacher and substantial numbers of the pupils, too many of whom were left working only slowly, unclear about the purpose of their tasks or struggling with inappropriate tasks and resources. A small number of otherwise satisfactory lessons were weakened by those deficiencies, and by others that included slow pace, inappropriate teaching methods or resources and inadequate attention to the range of needs across the class. The teachers usually drew on published materials, including conventional national schemes. However, few of the lessons had been planned in greater detail to reflect the needs of the particular day and class.

Leadership and management of the school are bearing down steadily and effectively on the causes of the school's serious weaknesses. The headship post has been advertised and filled by the acting headteacher who is tackling a complex set of problems with calm and well-informed determination and good support from a new substantive deputy headteacher. These senior managers share a commitment to dynamic development and to a greater emphasis by the staff on learning. An extended senior leadership team is giving a purposeful and focused role to subject leaders. Policies are being revised where they bear most closely on classroom practice, notably regarding assessment, teaching, learning and the curriculum.

The senior staff are establishing strong management arrangements, for example for productively focused meetings, systematic staff training and performance management. Improvement planning is sharply focused on the most urgent problems. The professional climate of the school is changing, though the rate of

change has been and remains to a degree restricted by the scale of need for professional development. The staff has sound morale, but it is not yet functioning fully as a team. Some teachers have left and new personnel are already operating effectively. Other staff are engaging in professional discussion to varying degrees. Changes of staff are being exploited to recruit strong teachers and this is accelerating the elimination of the school's serious weaknesses.

The school's budget surplus is largely committed to improving the school's elderly premises, which are in places unsympathetic to learning. The underlying patterns of expenditure are stretched by the school's costly staff, which includes a large number of classroom assistants. The school's scope for spending on resources is accordingly limited.

Sound use is being made of self-assessment. It is currently focused by the principal matters that require improvement, but the underlying processes are securely grounded in first-hand evidence and shaped to identify needs and inform the selection of priorities.

The school's action plan is satisfactory. It sets out concisely an appropriate range of specific changes and projects, with sound estimates of cost and helpful statements of criteria for success. The plan allocates responsibilities clearly, including those for monitoring and evaluation. It places, however, considerable demands on the school's senior managers, particularly in the early stages before more is delegated to subject leaders and class teachers.

The LEA has been aware of the school's precarious condition for some time. Its satisfactory commentary on the action plan reflects briefly the part it played in supporting the school through the period of the section 10 inspection, and in subsequent planning. Sound arrangements are specified to monitor the school's progress. The LEA rightly considers the action plan to be appropriately focused, realistic and achievable. The LEA's statement of action sets down a helpful programme of advice and general support for the school. This has been provided and is valued by the staff.

The LEA has not set a target date for the school's recovery, though its commentary and statement convey confidence that the school can overcome the causes of its serious weaknesses by the end of 2005, and be removed from the category at the next inspection. There appears to have been no explicit consideration of scope for the closure of the school. It is reported that there are at present no alternative places for the pupils and that consultation is in progress with a view to establishing a new school in the vicinity within the next few years. Meanwhile, the LEA is mindful of the needs of the school and keeping under consideration a variety of options for assisting with the costs of premises maintenance and development.

## **Action taken to address the areas for improvement**

### **1: continue to work to raise standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT by Years 2 and 6**

Planned steps have been taken to extend the teaching of basic skills, strengthen the role of subject leaders and increase teachers' accountability for pupils' progress. There are indications of improving provision and of rising attainment among the pupils in Years 2 and 6.

Progress is reasonable.

### **2: improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so that expectations of pupils are raised and that more able pupils are challenged more**

The quality of teaching has been evaluated above. The steps proposed in the action plan are being implemented. At this stage, higher expectations and fresh ideas have not become uniformly established. The overall quality of teaching compares unfavourably with that reported at the inspection in November 2004.

Progress is limited.

### **3: develop the curriculum for all children in the school so that it is exciting, enriched, and makes greater links between different areas of learning in reception, including developing the outside area, and subjects in the school**

Plans have been implemented to extend provision for ICT, develop the library, exploit more cross-curricular links and enhance the curriculum through trips out of school and the contributions of visitors. Benefits are arising from this across the school, though with potential for greater enrichment in the Foundation Stage.

Progress is reasonable.

### **4: continue to develop assessment in each subject so that teachers know accurately how well their pupils are doing and use the information to set clear targets and raise challenge in lessons**

Senior staff have successfully promoted staff discussion, refinement of National Curriculum assessments, more frequent assessment, more rigorous moderation, a fresh system for collating data about the pupils' attainments and arrangements for staff to set practical targets for the pupils.

Progress is reasonable.

Reasonable progress has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the school's serious weaknesses.

This visit has raised some concerns about the school's circumstances and the standard of education provided. The school's performance will be monitored and I am recommending a return visit.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Southend-on-Sea. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**MICHAEL MADDEN**  
**Additional Inspector**

cc: chair of governors  
LEA