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Mrs R Newton and Mrs J Thomas  
The Locum Headteachers  
West Huntspill Community Primary School  
New Road  
West Huntspill  
Highbridge  
Somerset  
TA9 3QE

Dear Mrs Newton and Mrs Thomas

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of West Huntspill Community  
Primary School

### Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 June 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Six parts of lessons were observed. Documents relating to the school's development and records of pupils' attainment and progress were scrutinised. Discussions were held with one of the locum headteachers, all teachers working in the school during the inspection, the school council, the chair of governors, and representatives of the local authority.

### Context

For most of the time since the last monitoring inspection in March 2007 the headteacher has been away from school unwell. Following a period of a few weeks during which one of the permanent teachers took responsibility for the everyday management of the school, a local Authority Advisor took over as Headteacher for a three week period. Since half term there have been two locum Headteachers. The

local authority advisor who started working in the school on 8 May is leading the school for three days each week. The other temporary leader for two days a week is an experienced headteacher seconded from a neighbouring local authority. Her involvement with the school began on 4 June. During this inspection, the school was led by the locum headteacher who is a local authority advisor.

A long-serving teacher left the school at the end of last term. A teacher on a temporary contract now teaches the class for pupils in Years 2 and 3. Arrangements for teaching the class of pupils in Years 5 and 6 continue to be temporary. The work of the resource base was not evaluated during this inspection.

Representatives of the local authority recently met with staff, governors and parents to consider options for the future of the school.

### Achievement and standards

Standards across the school remain too low overall. From broadly average starting points, most children in the Reception Year are on course to reach the nationally expected goals. Reception children are not always challenged fully, however, in relation to their capabilities and not all are doing as well as they could.

Pupils' progress remains just satisfactory in Year 1, although there is still some inconsistency in the level of challenge pupils receive, particularly for the more capable. Pupils in Year 2 are making much better progress this term than in the past. Nevertheless, there is a legacy of underachievement in Year 2 and no pupil is working at the higher levels for their age in reading, writing or mathematics.

Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is still patchy. Progress is good overall in reading and writing in Years 3 and 4. Whilst pupils in these years are making steady gains generally across the range of their school work, not all have made adequate progress in relation to their Year 3 starting points in mathematics. A few individual pupils in Years 5 and 6 have made good gains since the start of Year 3, but there is still underachievement in these years. Pupils' current progress is barely acceptable in Years 5 and 6, even though it has improved, and standards are not as high as they should be.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science – inadequate.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils continue to behave well and enjoy school, but this is less the case for some pupils in Years 5 and 6 than it is generally across the school. Pupils of all ages, including those in Years 5 and 6, speak positively of the changes that are taking place in school. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are enthusiastic about the 'table points' rewards system that, they say, makes them work harder. They really appreciate the

contribution that a leading professional from another school makes in their class and believe that, as a result of this, they are being 'pushed on' and 'encouraged to do well'. Pupils of all ages enjoy the start of the morning 'Wake and Shake' sessions which they say, 'get our brains ready for work.'

Pupils of all ages like their teachers and the other adults who help them. They form positive relationships with each other and with adults in school. They remain friendly, courteous and delightful young people. Their contribution to the school community, for example through the school council, is satisfactory.

Pupils feel safe at school and are sensible when moving about the school. They have a reasonable understanding of healthy eating. They know, for example, that fruit and vegetables are good for them and that they should not eat too much chocolate. Although pupils' progress in the basics of literacy and numeracy is improving, the legacy of underachievement means that not all pupils are being adequately prepared for their future lives.

#### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is improving, although the school recognises that there is still some considerable way to go. The change is significant for pupils in Year 2 and those in Year 3 who are taught with them. These pupils are not only starting to make satisfactory gains in their learning but they are also moving on at a good pace in some areas. This is particularly evident in the good advances made in recent weeks in writing. Strengths in teaching in Years 3 and 4 are being maintained. In other parts of the school in which teaching was previously inadequate in major respects, it is now close to a satisfactory level.

Teaching in Years 2 to 4, which is often good, is sharply focused on pupils' learning needs. Whole class, small group and individual activities have a clear purpose and are pitched at the right level. Teachers very clearly communicate to pupils what they want them to learn as a class and also relate this to individual targets to help pupils to make progress. Expectations of pupils are high in these years. All these strong features of teaching were evident in an English lesson in Years 2 and 3 in which pupils rose well to the challenges presented. In these classes, teaching assistants are deployed well. There are also examples in other classes of teaching assistants making a strong contribution to the learning of specific groups during lessons.

Instances of satisfactory teaching enable pupils to make adequate progress in their learning. However, there is still too much teaching that is barely acceptable. This is the case, for example, when not enough attention is paid to the needs of the full age as well as ability range in a class, particularly where two year groups have different learning needs such as in Reception and Year 1. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 sometimes experience too much presentation from the teacher and do not have enough opportunities to work actively to develop independence and initiative as learners. This is particularly so when the teacher's planning focuses too much on what the

teacher will do and not enough on how pupils will learn. When these weaknesses are present the pace of learning is too slow to compensate for pupils' past underperformance.

The curriculum includes all the recommended areas of learning in the Reception Year but there is not always a clear enough purpose to the activities provided. This means that, whilst children enjoy themselves, there are too many missed opportunities for them to develop particular knowledge, understanding and skills. In Years 1 to 6 there is adequate coverage of the required subjects.

Teachers are becoming more aware of the importance of making and recording regular assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. They are starting to put this understanding into practice and to recognise how assessment information should be used to match teaching and the curriculum to pupils' needs. This is an aspect of the school's work that has started to move on very recently and the school recognises that it needs much more attention. Assessment and recording of pupils' attainment and progress have not been carried out systematically, frequently, or regularly enough. Pastoral care remains secure, with examples of strong support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- ensure that teaching and curriculum provision meet the needs of all pupils – satisfactory
- make full use of the information gained from checking pupils' progress to improve planning and provide challenging work in lessons – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

This school is starting to turn round, having made slow progress for the first two terms of this school year, but the situation remains precarious and there is much still to be done. The work of the external consultants supporting the school is now being coordinated and built on from within the school. A major factor in the accelerating progress in recent weeks is the exceptionally clear educational direction provided by the locum headteacher from the local authority who has been in the school since early May. She has a very sharp and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in each class as well as in the school as a whole. She also has a clear plan of action for driving the quality of teaching and the curriculum forward in each class. Already the foundations are in place for the strong teamwork of the two temporary leaders to support further immediate development well.

Almost all staff are responding well to the external support the school is receiving. They are proving to be resilient and eager to take the school forward. A teacher at an early stage in her career greatly values the impact that a leading professional from another school has had in improving her teaching and the learning of the pupils in her class. Another more experienced teacher, who joined the school this term, identified the contribution that the local authority literacy consultant has already

made to improving the quality of the teaching of writing in her class. It is no wonder that the pupils can see, and are positive about, the effects of changes being made.

Teachers and teaching assistants are now more aware of their accountability for pupils' progress and attainment. There have been some positive developments recently in the action taken by the new special educational needs coordinator to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are properly identified, supported, and have their progress monitored. However, the school still relies heavily on external support to make improvements and does not have the capacity to move forward on its own. Staff are not sufficiently involved in leading and developing aspects of the school's work.

Governors remain committed to the school and determined that it should become successful. The increased involvement of the governor responsible for special educational needs is a positive development.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- improve systems and procedures for evaluating how well the school is performing – satisfactory.

#### External support

The local authority has continued to provide a significant amount of good support. This has been further intensified particularly in the assistance given to improve teaching in specific classes. The input of the local authority has helped the school to make a tangible start on the road to improvement following a period in which it failed to move on.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Improve teaching and, in particular, increase the amount of good teaching.
- Ensure that accurate assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are undertaken, recorded and used to match teaching and the curriculum to pupils' needs.
- Increase the involvement of staff in leading and developing areas of the school's work.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Young People for Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Alison Grainger  
Additional Inspector