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19 November 2007

Ms Andrea Curtis  
The Headteacher  
Bushfield School  
Moon Street  
Wolverton  
Milton Keynes  
MK12 5JG

Dear Ms Curtis

### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BUSHFIELD SCHOOL

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

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 2006. 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. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Milton Keynes.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou  
Additional Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BUSHFIELD SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 14 November 2007.

### Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and leadership team, pupils representing the school council and the chair of governors. Four lessons were observed, one in each of the four year groups, and the inspector looked through samples of pupils' recorded work, teachers' planning, assessments and tracking data.

### Context

Four teachers joined the school at the start of this term, including one newly qualified teacher. A permanent headteacher was appointed in September to replace the interim headteacher. Two assistant headteachers have been in post for three terms, although both will be leaving at the end of this term. As an interim measure, to replace the assistant headteachers, the newly appointed inclusion manager and another recently appointed senior teacher will join the leadership team next term. There have also been changes to the composition of the governing body. The chair and vice chair have recently been appointed and there are advanced plans to appoint new community governors and one parent governor. The local authority's (LA) school improvement partner is also new to the school.

### Achievement and standards

The most recent national tests and assessment information about pupils currently in the school confirm that standards continue to improve well. The test results show that the overall rate of achievement of pupils in Year 6 last year was satisfactory. This marks a significant turning point for the school as in previous years pupils were not making enough progress. In particular, the test results show that Year 6 pupils made good progress in English. For the first time in the last three years standards in national tests by the end of Year 6 reached the national average in English, mathematics and science.

The most encouraging aspect of the school's improvement is that the progress of pupils across the school is more consistent so that standards are continuing to rise. The major factors that have contributed to these improvements are the impact of the school's leadership on the quality of teaching and assessment, and the more consistent approaches to teaching the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers now use effective assessment and tracking, as well as accurate and well devised target setting, to regularly check how well pupils are doing and to intervene appropriately when some fall behind. More able pupils are now doing much better in mathematics compared with the time of the last visit and pupils' progress in reading and writing is at least satisfactory in all classes. This is because assessment and target setting have helped teachers to tailor their lessons so they are pitched at the right level for all pupils, including those with learning

difficulties or disabilities. Test results and assessment information also confirm that pupils learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2006:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science, and ensure that pupils reach their potential – *good*

### Personal development and well-being

This remains a significant strength of the school and has improved further. Excellent attendance rates reflect how well pupils enjoy school. There has been a noticeable improvement to pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. Behaviour and relationships are very good. Improvements in the consistency of the teaching and the higher expectations set by teachers have provided the pupils with more opportunities to be engaged in lessons and to share ideas with others. Pupils are increasingly given opportunities to air their views and to show initiative. Those who were reluctant to put up their hand or to participate in class discussions are now much more confident because of the warm and positive relationships that exist between pupils and staff. Pupils say that the staff appreciate their efforts very much, and this is reflected in the way their work is beautifully displayed around the school. Pupils respond very well to teachers' questions and are encouraged to extend their thinking further, for example through role-play, drama and 'hot-seating' activities. The headteacher and staff have re-introduced many extra activities before and after school and the very high take-up of clubs, sports, music sessions and special workshops reflects how well pupils enjoy them. The school council is much more involved than before in representing the views of other pupils across the school. They particularly like the many opportunities they are given to come up with new ideas, such as the 'Friday Fruit Stop', which is organised by pupils to encourage others to buy fruit at break-times. The playground buddies take their responsibilities seriously and look out for other pupils to ensure they are safe and looked after. School councillors are specially trained to spot and report any hazards and each member keeps their own note book to record these or to note any suggestions from other pupils that can be brought forward to the next council meeting.

### Quality of provision

Of the four lessons seen, one was outstanding, two were good and one was satisfactory with some good features. The school's own monitoring of teaching and learning is very thorough. The proportion of good and outstanding teaching seen during the visit matches that of the school's monitoring. There is now no inadequate teaching in any class, although there is still some satisfactory teaching that requires improvement in some areas. In particular, year leaders are intervening and supporting their colleagues more consistently to ensure that the pace and challenge provided for all pupils help them to reach their targets. The impact of more consistent and better teaching is making inroads into eliminating underachievement right across the school. Teachers' planning is more consistent across classes and, more often, teachers work closely with year leaders to check pupils' work and progress.

All lessons have learning objectives and teachers ensure that pupils know the success criteria that will show they have achieved them. The pace of lessons is usually good so pupils have many opportunities to practise and reinforce their skills. Despite this, there are still periods in lessons when whole-class discussions are too laboured, which slows the pace of learning. In all lessons there are good opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning. Individual reading, writing and mathematics targets are pasted into pupils' books and they regularly check to see if they have achieved them. Pupils are very clear about their targets. In an excellent Year 3 English lesson, for example, they talked about 'the next steps' they have to take to reach their writing target.

Teaching assistants are deployed quite well to support pupils who have specific learning difficulties. The quality of the support is usually good, although it is currently being reviewed by the inclusion manager to optimise the deployment of additional staff. The school is right to prioritise this as even in good lessons, there are times when small groups of pupils need additional support and the teacher is very stretched to provide it, especially when there is a wide range of ability in the class.

Regular assessments of the pupils' work are compared with those of other classes in each year group so there is now greater consistency in gauging the performance of pupils. In addition, assessments are closely linked to National Curriculum levels and there are very good systems to measure and calibrate the rates of progress each pupil makes. This has led to much sharper planning as tasks in lessons are now more closely matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils. In particular, there have been significant improvements to the way reading and writing are taught. Pupils have more opportunities to be critical readers and writers. English lessons usually incorporate challenging tasks that require the pupils to investigate different texts and genres of writing. Consequently, pupils are increasingly developing the skills necessary to tackle unfamiliar words when reading or to extend their sentences when writing more complex phrases. These improvements account for the faster rates of progress made by pupils in English so that standards are continuing to rise. Teacher's planning for mathematics lessons is better and a significant improvement since the last visit. In particular, pupils of higher ability are doing much better because tasks are pitched at the right level to meet their needs. Practical and engaging problem-solving tasks are provided so pupils are encouraged to explain their methods or use 'talk partners' to test hypotheses.

Teachers' marking is very helpful and precise, even detailing the key skills learned for each lesson so, for example, pupils are rewarded for trying to write complex sentences or when noting how they calculated and solved a number problem. Role-play and drama activities are used extensively and pupils enjoy them very much. They help them to articulate their ideas and to gain confidence. For example, in science lessons the pupils confidently share ideas when trying to explain what distinguishes solids from liquids.

Tracking and assessment systems are now excellent and are being consistently used by the staff to help pupils make up lost ground. Teachers are now better able to make regular checks on how well individuals and groups are doing to ensure they all reach their challenging targets. The new systems quickly identify pupils who are not making enough progress so that year leaders can intervene soon enough to address

this. Improvements to assessment and planning have enabled teachers to adopt much more productive and ambitious approaches to their lessons so that expectations of what the pupils are capable of achieving are much higher across the school. Teachers are now more confident that pupils will reach their targets because tracking and assessment are more precise and effective.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2006:

- Make significant improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Ensure that teachers have higher expectations of their pupils and provide achievable challenges to pupils of all levels of ability – *good*
- Make rigorous use of the new systems for checking pupils' progress to set and constantly review challenging targets for pupils to meet – *outstanding*

## Leadership and management

In a short time the headteacher has successfully built on what has already been achieved. She has a clear vision for where the school is going, and in order to get there, has set high expectations of herself, senior staff, governors and pupils. Despite the many staffing changes, the headteacher and governors have maintained stability through improved communication at all levels. The momentum of change and improvement has been maintained since the last visit and new appointments to the teaching staff have strengthened the teaching further. Morale is very high because the staff can see improvements very clearly. This has come about essentially through the very effective measures adopted to establish clear tracking and assessment systems.

The headteacher has implemented an effective programme of lesson monitoring. The judgements made are accurate and include appropriate feedback to the staff about how they can improve further. The headteacher works well with governors and senior colleagues and has reviewed the assistant headteacher roles, along with the roles of year leaders, to sharpen and clarify responsibilities in order to successfully manage further leadership changes in January. The new leadership team show confidence and consistency in implementing school monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure they support their colleagues. Regular reviews of pupils' performance now take place in each year group, which include moderating assessments across classes, checking consistency in pupils' workbooks and teachers' marking, and predicting or revising targets for pupils to aim towards. These have led to the much improved consistency in both the pupils' and teachers' performance across the school.

Every leadership and governor meeting places the pupils' achievements at the heart of the agenda. Accurate assessments of pupils' performance are fed back to governors, who are quickly adapting to this much more focussed approach to management. New appointments, including changes to the role of the inclusion manager, have strengthened the school's leadership capacity. The outcomes from meetings between year leaders and senior staff are reviewed regularly and who is responsible for what is rightly identified. Initiatives and interventions to deal with any pockets of underachievement by pupils or underperformance by staff are now followed through so that everyone knows what is expected of them.

The governing body continues to function effectively, despite the turnover of governors since the last visit. The headteacher's evaluation of the school's performance is accurate. Her reports to governors and to the LA are based on systematic and accurate evaluations of assessment data and the monitoring of lessons. Consequently, the key features of teaching and learning are well known and the improving strength in depth of good teachers means that the school is well placed to sustain improvements and to support weaker teachers. The school is now close to demonstrating that it has the capacity to bring about and maintain improvements.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2006:

- Improve the quality of leadership at all levels. Ensure that information from data and monitoring is used rigorously to bring about demonstrable improvements. Ensure that self-evaluation focuses sharply on the impact of initiatives on achievement and standards – *good*

### External support

The school has continued to receive good support from the LA and this has been particularly welcomed at a time of significant staff turnover. The impact of the work is evident in the progress the school is making and the much improved performance of pupils and staff. The work of the LA's subject consultants has continued to have a positive impact on attainment in English and mathematics so that pupils are developing basic skills at an improving rate. This is also helping them to do better in science and other subjects. The raising attainment plan has, rightly, superseded the school's original action plan and has a more focussed set of priorities for the school to manage which, in the short term, are achievable given the good improvements made since the last visit.