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13 March 2008

Mrs S Edwards  
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Dear Mrs Edwards

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF DENTON CE SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 March 2008, 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 February 2007. 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

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 governors, the Director of Children's Services and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikić  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF DENTON CE SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 11-12 March 2008

### Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of staff, representatives of the governing body, pupils, the School Improvement Partner (SIP) and the School Improvement Advisor (SIA) from the local authority (LA)

### Context

Since the last visit a temporary teacher has been appointed to cover a vacancy. A review of staffing has taken place resulting in changes for September 2008. The current Year 1 and 2 class teacher will take over the mixed Year 3 and 4 class. A newly qualified teacher has been appointed on a permanent basis from September for the mixed Foundation Stage, Year 1 and 2 class. Since January 2008 the headteacher has taken on the role of subject leader for literacy. The governing body is now complete following the appointment of two parents and one LA governor. The LA link role of the Senior School Improvement Advisor has recently changed.

### Achievement and standards

Standards are rising and rates of progress are increasing although the legacy of slow progress and inconsistent teaching means that some gaps in learning remain for Key Stage 2 pupils. Good progress continues to be made in Year 6 this year as indicated by monitoring activities but some pupils will not have sufficient time to catch up following previous disruption. The school's procedures for managing and using pupil assessment information are now more secure. This has introduced greater accountability through pupil progress meetings, and is leading to higher expectations across the school.

With the support of LA consultants and the SIA subject leaders are now able to analyse and interpret progress data more confidently. This analysis does not yet include comparisons with national standards overall or by subject. The mapping of progress against targets is providing clear information to enable teachers to identify underperformance and to act quickly to intervene. In some cases this means adjusting targets to increase the level of challenge in addition to providing extra support to accelerate progress. This approach is now ensuring that the learning of all pupils is being assessed regularly to inform provision. Analysis has been used to focus planning on the development of writing which was shown to be a weaker aspect. The role of teaching assistants has been developed to provide more focused support in the classroom for targeted pupils. Evidence from the first round of intervention has been positive. Intervention has been adjusted in response to more recent assessments particular for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 6.

The accuracy of assessment by national curriculum sub levels has improved through moderation exercises involving external support and links with a neighbouring school. The school's own data indicates that pupils are working at age related expectations although underachievement remains in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 3 and 4. Although some aspects of good and sometimes better progress is made in most year groups it remains too variable and hampers progression throughout the school. Assessment for learning has become a stronger feature although this remains a priority to secure greater consistency. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 display confidence and skill in assessing and improving their work. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are now using traffic light symbols routinely to assess their learning. This is less well developed in Years 3 and 4. In all years pupils are far more aware of their learning targets and how to improve the quality of their work.

Recent assessment in the Foundation Stage indicates that achievement is above LA averages in all areas of learning. There is evidence that adjustments to provision following the outcomes of the 2007 inspection are boosting boys reading skills.

Detailed reports to governors about pupil progress have improved for Key Stage 1 and 2 in the core subjects. However, this is yet to extend to the Foundation Stage and so hinders the development of a comprehensive picture of standards and achievement throughout the school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- Raise standards and the achievement of pupils by the end of Year 6 – satisfactory progress.

#### Personal development and well-being

Pupils are friendly, welcoming and support each other very well. They behave sensibly and show care and consideration for one another. Good relationships support positive attitudes across the school. Pupils enjoy their learning and settle to work quickly. They are confident in class and able to talk about their learning and how to improve their work. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 especially enjoy the challenges available to work independently and in groups to demonstrate their learning. The provision of equipment at playtime means that pupils have plenty of exercise, are involved and have fun.

#### Quality of provision

Some aspects of teaching and learning have improved since the last visit with a stronger focus on the use of assessment information to guide planning. Although much of the school's teaching profile is similar to the previous visit, teaching does not provide the consistency necessary for pupils to build effectively on their prior learning. Regular use of learning objectives, success criteria and layered targets is helping to build pupil confidence and involvement in their learning. This is supported by more structured opportunities for paired and group work to engage pupils and to make them think. Planning has improved with a sharper focus on the needs of different sub groups but this is not yet sufficiently refined or consistent across the school to meet the needs of mixed age and ability groups. The school has recently

agreed a common marking policy following feedback from the SIP to bring greater consistency across classes.

Pupils are making good progress where teachers' expectations are high and challenging tasks set, supported by precise planning. The expert use of questioning means that pupils expect to justify their answers. Pupils are motivated, enthusiastic and keen to improve. In some satisfactory lessons pupils are sitting for too long which is slowing the pace of learning, and reducing opportunities for pupils to progress at their level, or to catch up. Activities are not always pitched to match the abilities of pupils which limit progress further. Teaching assistants work effectively to support the learning of targeted individuals and groups. They work flexibly and skilfully across classes, and engage pupils actively in their learning to support progression.

The curriculum has improved to reflect priorities highlighted from the work of consultants and subject leaders. The systematic planning of guided reading, problem solving and scientific enquiry has supported a whole school approach to delivery. There is recognition that a more thematic approach is required to strengthen creativity, and cross curricular subject links beyond core subjects.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring all work is sufficiently challenging and provides opportunities for independent learning – satisfactory progress.

#### Leadership and management

The quality of work undertaken by subject leaders has improved considerably since the last visit. Training, sharing practice and modelling by the headteacher has increased the confidence and independence of subject leaders. They have completed a cycle of monitoring activities and improved the quality of feedback to staff and governors. Good input from consultants has led to rigorous work scrutiny, and the identification of areas for improvement and action. Subject leaders have demonstrated that they can lead initiatives such as guided reading, problem solving and the promotion of enquiry skills in science. Monitoring information has been gathered to evaluate the impact and to determine the next steps. This work has led to an information evening for parents to support literacy and numeracy at home.

Since the last visit, two subject leaders have joined the headteacher to form a leadership team. This has strengthened capacity, sustainability and involvement in whole school strategic leadership. Although a recent development this is already broadening horizons and leading to a more strategic view of priorities within the school. School leaders recognise the need to sustain monitoring, evaluation and improvement activities with a reduction of external support to demonstrate capacity across the school.

Following the last visit governors made a rapid and positive response. Regular focused visits have taken place to observe the school at work and to meet with the headteacher and staff to review aspects of the action plan. Governors are now more

confident following training to engage in monitoring and evaluation activities. As a result they display a greater knowledge and understanding of the school's work, and an appreciation of their role. There is evidence that governors are asking challenging questions to enable them to evaluate more accurately the school's strengths and weaknesses, and to inform decisions.

Participation has improved across the governing body, through improved communication, greater preparation for meetings, focused agendas and efficient leadership. A monitoring calendar has been agreed to coordinate activities, and link roles confirmed for subjects and improvement areas. The governing body has been strengthened by new members and is now displaying confidence and urgency in moving the school forward. This has been supported further by the additional governors appointed by the LA.

School leaders and governors are working together supported by training to complete the school's self evaluation form based on their own monitoring, review and evaluation. This work is supporting a shared view of priorities for the new improvement plan.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- Strengthen the leadership of the school by improving the strategic planning and the self evaluation – good progress.
- Improving the role of the governing body in evaluating, challenging and planning the work of the school – good progress.

External support

The headteacher has made good use of external support to meet specific needs and to support the introduction of new frameworks for the Foundation Stage, literacy and numeracy. Subject consultants have provided valuable support to core leaders to develop subject knowledge, skills and confidence in undertaking monitoring and evaluation activities. Developments with assessment tracking have been supported effectively by the SIA, who has also provided regular monitoring visits to validate the school's judgements. Additional support and guidance has been provided for the newly qualified teacher. Work scrutiny conducted by the SIP has assisted teachers in moderating the quality of writing across the school. Links with a neighbouring school is providing a sustainable approach for validating the school's assessment, and for the sharing of good practice.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop coaching and modelling across the school to share good practice to ensure effective progression.