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26 June 2008

Mr Walters
The Headteacher
Eastover Community Primary School
Wellington Road
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TA6 5EX

Dear Mr Walters

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EASTOVER
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit to your school on 18 June 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 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.

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 Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services for Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Palk
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF EASTOVER COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 18 June 2008

Evidence

I observed lessons, scrutinised documents and a sample of pupils' writing books. I met with the headteacher, the school improvement adviser, the chair and vice chair of the governing body, the senior leadership team and a group of pupils.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the interim headteacher has been appointed to the substantive post of headteacher.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The school has a clearer picture of children's levels when they enter in the Foundation Stage which shows that children are broadly below the expected starting point for their age. Data shows that pupils make good progress in the Reception classes in communication, language and literacy and in writing and reading between Year 1 and Year 6. Good progress in reading, writing and mathematics is noted in most year groups. Good progress by those pupils at risk of underperformance is now the norm in reading and writing and a significant proportion are exceeding their predicted end of year targets. This is because teachers have an accurate view of each pupil's level of ability, and are matching work much more closely to their needs. The well embedded assessment procedures have provided a good picture of those areas of mathematics where there are still gaps in pupils' skills. This is leading to effective action to improve the match of work and expectations for all pupils. The success of regular teaching of letters and sounds and teaching of reading has a good impact on reading attainment. There are regular opportunities for pupils to learn the craft of writing for different purposes and good attention is paid to grammar that has resulted in more pupils reaching age related expectations. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because their targets are detailed and focus appropriately on small gains in their learning. Assessment information shows that pupils are likely to attain expected levels in national tests at the end of the academic year in 2008.

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

- increase pupils' progress and raise their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by raising teachers' expectations of pupils' capabilities – good.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave very well in lessons and around the school. Pupils have good opportunities in lessons to develop their speaking and listening skills which help to build their confidence. They are proud of the progress they are making. Pupils have a good understanding of what they have achieved and appreciate the clarity of their targets and the guidance they are given to do their best. They work well independently because appropriate resources are available. In explaining why they are doing well, most pupils stated it was because they were better at reading. The good relationships they have with their teachers and the adults make a good contribution to learning in lessons.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned thoroughly and questioning is used well to draw out pupils' ideas. Teachers have made good progress in securing reliable data on pupils' past performance. Assessment information is being used very effectively to plan for pupils' different levels of ability. There is sharper and more focused planning in mathematics following the evaluations of pupils' performance. The improvement in teachers' understanding of using criteria has resulted in much tighter match of work to abilities. As a result, pupils receive the right level of challenge and lessons are busy and purposeful. Teaching assistants often assume responsibility for running small groups or working with individual pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They work hard and have good channels of communication with teachers and managers who set clear expectations of pupils' progress. The training that teaching assistants have received in supporting reading and writing has improved their confidence when helping small groups and ensures they can play a full part in the assessment of pupils' learning.

Marking is of good quality and consistent in all classes. Learning objectives and success criteria are displayed in pupils' books which helps them to understand the level at which they are working and how their work might be improved.

Planning of the curriculum has continued well since the last visit. There is a strong emphasis on teaching letters and sounds in the Foundation Stage, giving them greater confidence to read and write. Pupils' learning is well supported through attractive displays, relevant vocabulary, and exemplar of what 'good' writing looks like. Plans are further advanced to revise the curriculum from September 2008. The emphasis on a skills based curriculum combined with teachers' interests and expertise has the potential to further raise standards and pupils' achievements.

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

- improve teaching by assessing incisively the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and address these gaps at a more challenging rate – good
- ensure that all pupils have equitable access to a relevant and balanced curriculum – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide a very strong impetus for improvement. He has been particularly successful in securing the involvement of all staff in moving the school forward through involving them in action planning. The strategic role of the senior leadership has grown significantly. Senior leaders have clear expectations of their roles and have benefited from appropriate training to strengthen their leadership skills. They have devised and implemented an excellent system for tracking pupil's progress in English and mathematics. There is a well established programme for monitoring and evaluating the impact of action planning and leaders are playing an increasing role in leading staff development. Teaching and learning and pupils' work are monitored regularly and areas for further development identified. Leaders are moderating work to provide a clearer picture of pupils' standards and they are using data to set targets and identify weaker areas and drive up standards. The leaders have welcomed the sharp focused agenda and the regularity with which they meet to discuss school performance. Lines of communication between themselves and other staff, through their leadership of the pupil progress meetings and management of support staff, have strengthened appreciably and are a key factor in accelerating progress of a significant proportion of pupils. Good work by curriculum leaders has been undertaken in redesigning a skills based curriculum. Morale is high and the senior leaders and other managers are clear about the next steps to secure continued good improvement.

The governing body is improving its knowledge of the school's work. Each governor has oversight of particular aspects of the school's action plan and several have conducted visits and reported on the school's performance. This is a positive step. Governors are working well with the headteacher and the core support group to provide a systematic review of the school's performance and ensure longer term strategic planning.

The school has an accurate picture of its present and future financial position based on reliable monthly and end of year reconciliations. Strict and effective financial management processes have been implemented that ensure correct financial accountability. The review of staffing costs, combined with other analysis of expenditure, has resulted in considerable savings. The expenditure on learning has not been compromised but has benefited from the strong links to key priorities and the Ofsted action plan. The projected deficit has been balanced.

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

- as a matter of urgency, build the capacity of leaders at all levels so that they are able to focus relentlessly on remedying the school's weaknesses, and can evaluate the impact of their work – good
- devise and implement a financial recovery plan – outstanding.

External support

The local authority provides good support to the school. The school's action planning is well supported by quantifiable success criteria and key milestones for judging progress in raising standards and improving achievements. The core support group,

led by the local authority, monitors short term goals effectively. The work of the school improvement adviser, an experienced headteacher, has proved invaluable in building the confidence of senior leaders at the school in evaluating and monitoring school performance. She has provided professional challenge and consistency to the headteacher and leaders and ensured that the responsibility for improvement is shared by all. Training by a team of consultants in literacy, numeracy and the early years has been effective in building capacity to sustain progress. Governors have received useful training in establishing clear roles and responsibilities and have been well supported in seeing these through and in building capacity across the whole governing body.