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19 May 2009

Mrs Polly Honeychurch  
Headteacher  
Cottage Grove Primary School  
Chivers Close  
Southsea  
PO5 1HG

Dear Mrs Honeychurch

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Cottage Grove Primary School

Following my visit with Judith Howell, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 May 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 the interim executive board (IEB) and the Strategic Director Children, Families & Learning for Portsmouth.

Yours sincerely

John Seal  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Cottage Grove Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 May 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the chair of the IEB and representatives from the local authority.

## Context

Since the inspection, there have been some changes in staffing and responsibilities. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has been redeployed to teach in Key Stage 1 and has taken on the role of numeracy leader. A new Key Stage 1 teacher commenced teaching at the beginning of the summer term. The deputy headteacher's role now includes managing the curriculum and assessment and leading the team that teach the mixed Year 3 and 4 classes. The special educational needs coordinator's role has changed to that of inclusion manager which incorporates support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.

## Achievement and standards

The unvalidated national test results for 2008 indicate that, by the end of Year 2, standards remained below average in reading writing and mathematics. Results for Year 6 indicate that standards in English, mathematics and science were below average.

The school's tracking and analysis of pupils' progress across the school, from the beginning of the autumn term 2008 to the spring term 2009, indicates that more pupils in all year groups are making better progress than in previous terms. In some cases pupils' progress is rapid, leading to their attainment being in line with national expectations. The school's assessments show that a significant proportion of pupils do less well because their standards of attainment remain below average in English and mathematics. However, pupils learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave well around the school and in the playground. Exclusions figures are very low. During lessons, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards learning. Despite the school's best efforts to work with other agencies and use various methods of communication with parents, attendance continues to be below average in all year groups. The school's analysis of the attendance figures suggests that a high proportion of pupils whose attendance is low often have 'non-specific' illnesses. As a result, the school is exploring suitable strategies for working more closely with

health services. Pupils' low attainment in English and mathematics hinders their economic well-being.

### Quality of provision

There have been satisfactory improvements in the teaching since the school's inspection, with an increasing proportion of lessons that are good. With the support of the local authority, the school has implemented a suitable professional training programme to improve teachers' subject knowledge and use of assessment information in their planning. As a result, there is an improvement in the proportion of good lessons but there is not yet a high enough proportion of them or enough consistency to enable all pupils to make good progress over time. Where teaching is good, lesson plans are detailed and match the learning needs of different groups and abilities. These plans use pupil information well to enable teachers to provide pupils with clear directions and learning intentions so that they know what is expected of them. There are practical activities where pupils are able to access suitable resources and materials to support their learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed and work well with groups and individuals. Pupils know what to do next to improve. Teachers ask questions which challenge pupils' thinking. There are frequent occasions within lessons for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills through discussions about their work with each other. In Reception and in Years 1 and 2, pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills for learning more independently. Where teaching is less effective, pupils' prior knowledge, learning and capabilities are not always taken into account, even though the written planning acknowledges most pupils' needs. As a result, pupils become frustrated and confused, which slows their progress down. Pupils' opportunities for learning independently are limited because they are unable to access appropriate resources and there are limited opportunities for discussion. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils with English as an additional language are generally well supported.

Curriculum planning has continued to improve since the inspection. There is a good focus on whole-school topics. Pupils are more motivated and keen to learn. Planning for literacy and numeracy is more detailed and beginning to have some impact on pupil progress, although the school recognises that there is still much to be done in these areas. The quality of writing in other subjects has been a focus for the school and is improving. Good examples of writing are seen on the 'writing walls' in many classes. The school's organisation of visits and visitors to enrich pupil's learning and social experiences continues to be a strength.

The school cares well for the pupils and relationships are good. Procedures for safeguarding are secure. Systems to support academic guidance have improved and there is clear, accurate and detailed information regarding pupils' progress. The school is beginning to evaluate and analyse this information and to use it to support lesson planning more effectively. These systems are still quite recent and the full impact of them is yet to be seen.

## Leadership and management

The headteacher has had to deal with many challenges relating to the context of the school. These and the high rate of mobility in staff over the last few years have limited the capacity of the leadership team to tackle the demands of raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Although the pace of improvements is increasing, there is still much to be done. A new deputy headteacher was appointed at the start of the autumn term and his work with Key Stage 2 teachers is beginning to have a positive effect. Since the inspection, self-evaluation has improved and is providing the headteacher and leadership team with a clearer and more accurate view of the quality of teaching and of pupils' progress. Subject and year leaders are now taking a more active role in the monitoring of lessons and, in conjunction with the local authority support team, provide a clearer picture of what the school has to do to improve further. The school's improvement plan appropriately identifies expected outcomes for pupils and actions for development. The school has an IEB which was established at the beginning of the spring term and has replaced the governing body. It is providing suitable challenge to the school and is developing well into the role of critical friend. The group has a clear understanding of what the school's priorities are and how they should be tackled. As a result of the recent changes to the structure of the school's leadership and management, there are some indications of a more positive impact on the outcomes for pupils.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards and achievement by ensuring that all lessons provide activities that match the needs of pupils of all abilities in each class – satisfactory
- ensure systems to track and analyse pupils' progress provide information that clearly shows pupils' rates of progress, particularly in the longer term, so that the school can take effective action more promptly – satisfactory
- ensure that the school's improvement plan contains clear success criteria, so that outcomes can be accurately measured and all leaders held accountable, in order to accelerate the pace of change within the school – satisfactory
- improve curriculum planning for literacy and numeracy in the mixed-age classes so that it caters for the full spread of ages and abilities – satisfactory
- improve attendance by continuing to emphasise to parents the impact that absence from school has on their child's progress – satisfactory.

## External support

The local authority has a satisfactory action plan and has supported the school with appropriate actions. The School Improvement Partner has worked well alongside the headteacher through her regular visits and has provided more capacity in the leadership team. The school is benefiting from the effective support and guidance of literacy and numeracy consultants. The local authority was robust in its challenge to the governors and in establishing the IEB.



## Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the pace of improvement by continuing to develop the capacity and capability of all leaders and managers so they are able to monitor rigorously, evaluate and take the appropriate actions needed to raise attainment and improve the quality of teaching and learning.