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7 July 2010

Mrs J Edwards  
Headteacher  
Germander Park School  
1 Germander Place  
Conniburrow  
Milton Keynes  
MK14 7DU

Dear Mrs Edwards

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Germander Park School

Following my visit with Peter Callow, additional inspector, to your school on 29 and 30 June 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Milton Keynes.

Yours sincerely

Christine Field  
Additional inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Germander Park School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 June 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed nine lessons and looked through samples of pupils' work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, pupils, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Partner.

## Context

Since the time of the last visit the headteacher has been made permanent and two new teachers have been appointed in Years 1 and 2. The teacher seconded from the partner school to work in Year 2 continues to work in the school supporting specific groups. A resident consultant funded by the local authority continues to work in the school two mornings a week. The former vice-chair has taken up office as the Chair of the Governing Body, and two new governors have been recruited bringing the complement up to five with parent governor elections planned for the autumn term. The local authority's consultation on the school's reorganisation is currently on hold.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The pupils' achievement is improving because they are starting to make better progress in all year groups and to enjoy their learning more. Their progress is accelerating because of more engaging teaching and pupils' growing awareness about the purpose of their learning. However, these improvements are recent and there remains much lost ground to make up for by a significant number of pupils and particularly those capable of reaching higher levels. Attainment is showing signs of improvement in reading and mathematics but not in writing, alongside speaking and listening skills. Pupils' productivity and enjoyment in learning is more positive than at the time of the last visit. However, in a few lessons, their progress slows when they are asked to sit for too long without active involvement.

The effective approach to helping pupils build confident reading skills has been well embedded with daily phonics sessions proving to be worthwhile experiences for pupils of all abilities. The 'Better Reading Partner' strategy has had good impact on extending the reading skills of proficient readers. Regular reading practice is supporting those who struggle with reading to move forward with confidence. The recently moderated national test data indicate that 68% of Year 2 pupils are working at or above the level expected for their age, which is an 18% increase since the last visit and exceeds the local authority target.

The scrutiny of pupils' books shows that writing skills remain weak. For example, too many pupils find difficulty in copying text from the board with accuracy and so words



are misspelt. Additionally, their limited vocabulary hinders both the quality of work and adversely affects the standard of creative writing. Over the last month work in pupils' books shows improvement in presentation, with all pieces of writing dated and the learning intention flagged clearly. Teachers are now giving closer attention to grammar and punctuation but quicker follow-up is required where there are repeated errors. The recently moderated national test data indicate that 47% of Year 2 pupils are working at or above the level expected for their age, which is well below the local authority target.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise pupils' attainment, especially in reading and writing and in Years 1 and 2 – satisfactory

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' generally positive behaviour underpins their increasingly purposeful learning. The significant inattention observed at the last visit during some class activities in Year 1 is being improved by better organisation and consistent and positive behaviour management. Occasionally teachers spend too long giving information at the start of lessons which results in pupils becoming restless and off task. A well-planned focus on promoting opportunities for personal reflection in assemblies is assisting pupils' moral and spiritual development. Pupils' behaviour when at play continues to be positive. Attendance and punctuality are on track to reach the challenging targets set due to the school's effective strategies and good links with parents.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Eliminate poor behaviour and low level disruption to learning in Years 1 and 2 by ensuring teachers set and maintain consistent expectations for work and play – satisfactory

#### The effectiveness of provision

The teaching observed during the visit is clearly having a better impact on pupils' learning than at the time of the last visit but is still not good enough to enable all pupils to make up for lost learning in the past. Lesson planning is showing a sharper focus on meeting the needs of different learners than previously with the majority of lesson plans now identifying the intended learning outcomes for different groups. Staff have higher expectations of pupils, although opportunities continue to be missed to challenge the more able learners. A new teaching for learning policy usefully sets out the school's expectations for quality outcomes but this has yet to be embedded.

Well-focused intervention, particularly in reading, and the use of next step targets are assisting pupils' better progress. Marking is far more focused on helping pupils know how to improve their work than previously with opportunities for pupils to



respond to their teacher's comments, although practice is not yet uniform. A very recent improvement has been the introduction of success criteria to enable pupils to evaluate how well they have met the learning objective. Sharper monitoring and more robust assessments are enabling teachers and school leaders to gain a clear picture of how well pupils are achieving.

The pace and the level of challenge in lessons are improving as in a phonics session in Year 1 where pupils made good progress as they sat in a circle and considered final consonants such as 'k' in 'sink'. The circle arrangement enabled the teacher to closely observe how well the pupils were responding and target those who demonstrated they were ready for a harder challenge. However, there are still too many occasions where the pace slows and some pupils switch off because they are not involved in active learning. Teachers' questioning is satisfactory on the whole but in some lessons pupils at the back of a group, especially when on the carpet, can be left for too long without involvement. Strategies such as 'talking partners' help secure pupils' focus but this strategy now requires review to ensure that all pupils understand exactly what is required and that a good conversation requires good listening as well as talking.

Much better focus is now being given to take stock of learning at key points in lessons than at the last visit but too few opportunities are given for pupils to review the learning gains they have made. Pupils are not yet fully confident to share their views in open discussion and speaking and listening, alongside writing skills, still require further development.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in Years 1 and 2 by: increasing the pace and demand of lessons; establishing a closer match of work to pupils' individual abilities; using probing questions to deepen understanding and stimulate discussion – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The permanent appointment of the headteacher has given stability to the life and development of the school. Staff morale is upbeat and purposeful and a culture of high expectations is emerging. Strategic planning has been reviewed with the support of a recently attached executive headteacher and aligned with the key priorities now set out in the revised action plans. This approach has resulted in staff being clear about their roles and how they can contribute to future improvement. Subject leaders in English and mathematics are now undertaking a range of monitoring activities that are assisting better outcomes for the pupils, although they recognise that more focus is required on evaluating the impact of teaching on learning and progress. The headteacher, with support from the local authority, has been proactive in securing permanent experienced teaching staff that also offers potential to widen the subject leadership base.



The monitoring of teaching continues to bring about better quality learning. Findings from monitoring are being used to inform increasingly useful feedback to staff who are willing to adapt their practice to better meet the needs of all pupils. The new Chair of the Governing Body is undertaking the role of critical friend to good impact. The Progress and Standards Committee set up at the time of the last visit now meets monthly and is increasingly using the school's assessment data and asking challenging questions about how pupils are expected to catch up to the national level. Work is in hand to recruit parent governors onto the governing body.

Parents hold positive views about the school, with the number on roll increasing from 63 to 92 from September. Parents told inspectors how much they appreciate the additional support their children are receiving, for example the speech and language input for those with specific needs. Some parents identified that they would like to know more about the impact of the changes being made at the school.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Build the school's capacity to improve by ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of their roles as leaders and managers, and assess their performance against the targets set in the school's 'Raising Attainment Plan' – satisfactory

#### External support

The local authority moved quickly after the first monitoring inspection to bring about improvement, for example in the appointment of permanent staff. The School Improvement Partner continues to be the main conduit for change management with the recently attached executive headteacher playing a key role in strategic planning. The local authority is providing effective support for developing the school's internal capacity for sustained improvement.

#### Priorities for further improvement

There are no further priorities for improvement. The school should press ahead with the key areas for improvement as set out.