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14 June 2010

Mrs A Hilton-Childs  
The Headteacher  
Meath Green Junior School  
Greenfields Road  
Horley  
Surrey  
RH6 8 HW

Dear Mrs Hilton-Childs,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Meath Green Junior School

Following my visit with Andrew Lyons, additional inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 May 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures is inadequate.

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 Surrey.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Meath Green Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 May 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work through observing lessons, scrutiny of documents and pupils' work and met with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, groups of pupils, the chair of the governing body and one representative from the local authority.

## Context

Since the last inspection the school has had some support from the local authority to help build capacity at senior and middle leadership and teacher levels. The school faces considerable challenges that include raising morale amongst staff, fully developing capacity within its current senior and middle leaders and managers, and setting a new direction and whole-school strategy for the raising of standards and achievement of its pupils. Since January 2010 the school has been linked with a nearby infant school and this has involved much closer working, including observations of teaching and joint moderation of pupils' work.

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

The school evaluates pupils' attainment as low and the quality of pupils' learning and progress as inadequate. The number of pupils who make the expected progress each year in relation to their starting points is significantly below national averages and well below the outcomes for pupils in similar schools. However, a three-year decline in standards and achievement is now being reversed through identifying under-achieving pupils and targeting additional support outside the classroom. Teacher assessments for pupils in Year 6 predict that the numbers of pupils making satisfactory progress since Year 3 has slightly increased this year, although this is still well below national averages. Pupils' attainment is affected adversely by their varying levels of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils arrive in school with above average Key Stage 1 attainment, however the attainment of these pupils in Years 3 and 4 dips significantly and is much worse than when they are assessed in Years 5 and 6.

The school is aware it needs to focus more systematically on assessing pupils' attainment upon entry to school, to ensure greater accuracy. Managers have prioritised the need to consolidate the improved levels of attainment gained by the end of Key Stage 2 through better teaching and use of assessment in Years 3 and 4.

In too many lessons in younger year groups, pupils are not making the progress they are capable of and are not attaining the standards they should in line with their potential. This is largely because teachers are not setting learning objectives and planning appropriate learning activities based on their pupils' prior attainment as

they do not have access to accurate data about their pupils. Expectations of pupils are too low and the pace of teaching and staging of activities are often pitched inappropriately. Too little use is made of assessment activities that can inform teachers of the progress that individual pupils are making. In the good and better lessons observed, in English, science and mathematics, especially in Year 6, pupils were aware of what they needed to do to progress and improve their work. Assessment processes underpinned the planning of activities so that pupils enjoyed their learning, were challenged and well supported, and aspired to higher levels of attainment.

The school does not as yet have systematic strategies in place to disseminate this good practice to other teachers teaching the same subjects. Evidence through work scrutiny and discussion with pupils in lessons, showed a number of pupils displaying poor literacy skills, especially spelling, and weak numeracy skills. Handwriting skills and presentation of work, especially in English, have improved since the last inspection with some good displays of work observed around the school. However, the presentation of work in mathematics was generally untidy, lacked accuracy and careful attention to detail. The work of pupils in Years 5 and 6 was better presented than in the younger year groups.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science by:
  - putting in place, by April 2010, an effective and consistent system for assessing pupils' progress – inadequate.

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

In general, pupils' behaviour is good and they are respectful, enthusiastic and keen to learn. Low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons was only observed in a small minority of lessons where pupils do not have sufficient direction from their teacher to know what they should be doing, or in situations where they are bored as the tasks set lack challenge. As a result, some pupils get restless and are unable to concentrate on their learning.

At the last inspection, some aspects of pupil safety on site lacked rigour. However, during this monitoring visit, the school had fully resolved these issues.

#### The effectiveness of provision

Since the last inspection, the school has revised its lesson observation proforma to raise levels of awareness amongst teachers of the importance of planning challenge into their learning objectives and activities. Although a monitoring programme of lesson observations was agreed in the spring term, the actual observations had too little focus on the learning and progress of pupils in lessons. Too often, teaching does not meet the needs of all pupils in the class, in particular higher attaining pupils and those with poor literacy skills. In addition, support staff are not involved closely enough in the planning of in-class support. Whilst some good practice was observed

out of lessons, a minority of support staff do not always work effectively with individuals in lessons. A significant proportion of lessons observed during the inspection were deemed satisfactory and a fifth was judged inadequate. A small proportion of lessons were judged as good, with only one as outstanding. This is a slightly improving picture than at the time of the last inspection.

In science, pupils are keen to develop investigative skills and, given the structured opportunities, can apply their knowledge and understanding to good effect. However, too often teachers are unclear about the learning objectives they have set and are unable to link the learning objectives to the activities. In mathematics, little use is made of everyday contexts in enabling pupils, especially those of lower ability, to understand how to transfer their skills and knowledge to real life situations. Where pupils work in meaningful contexts, their learning is accelerated and most make good progress. In many lessons observed, there was too much teacher talk, pupils copying from the whiteboard or working from worksheets, with limited opportunities for pupils to engage in structured paired and group work. More able pupils are often not stretched in their learning. Some good use of interactive whiteboards is made by teachers, but insufficient opportunities are given to pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills. Better teaching was observed in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4.

The quality of feedback pupils receive in class is inconsistent. Too often teachers do not check what pupils are learning before moving on to the next activity. Some teachers offer clear explanations where pupils' answers to questions or written work demonstrate the need for further guidance, whilst others leave misunderstandings unchecked. The majority of teachers do not ensure that pupils correct or redraft work as necessary, so that they are able to learn from their errors. Academic guidance and marking lack a solid and consistent foundation of accurate assessment of pupils' learning.

A review of the classroom environment carried out by the school resulted in self-help mathematics resources being more accessible for pupils during lessons. On the other hand, pupils do not have easy access to dictionaries and are not encouraged to use these during lessons. A number of pupils do not develop the necessary independent learning strategies and referencing skills.

Mathematics and literacy targets have recently been introduced to pupils and staff, with pupils being encouraged to identify their own targets, but this process is at a very early stage. Targets set and reviewed through pupil progress meetings are not challenging enough for all pupils. The school's data that measure pupils' attainment are not consistently accurate.

The school is now moving towards developing cross-curricular links, in particular, so that teachers can encourage pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills in more meaningful contexts and other subjects.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- ensuring teaching improves by summer 2010 so that all is satisfactory, and much good, and that pupils' learning is appropriately challenging and based on good assessment information – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher is now prioritising the need for her deputy head and subject coordinators to have clearer roles and greater responsibility and accountability. There is an urgent need for the senior leadership team to develop good self-evaluation skills and be able to identify challenging targets for the school.

Since the last inspection inadequate progress has been made on improving the rigour with which teaching and learning are monitored. The quality assurance systems and processes do not yet include judgements on the quality of assessment that lie at the core of teaching and learning. In addition, there is little consistency between teachers and managers about the criteria used to judge the level of pupils' learning and progress and no work scrutiny in place that would help identify levels of progress.

The headteacher is currently the special educational needs coordinator for the school and is therefore unable to secure the necessary and urgent actions needed to bring about whole-school change. She has recently carried out a review of her senior leadership team's roles and responsibilities and is now clear about the three areas that need addressing. These comprise assessment and teaching, development of literacy and numeracy skills, and cross-curricular links. The school is committed to raising expectations through setting challenging targets based on national comparative data, but as yet has not included targets on the progress expected in each key stage.

The school has made satisfactory progress in establishing a parental forum that has engaged parents and carers. The governing body has been slow in responding effectively to the areas for improvement since the last inspection, especially in terms of governor training. These critical areas include understanding pupil performance data and creating greater rigour in self-evaluation processes, so that they are able to offer more robust challenge and support to the school. However, training sessions are now planned for the summer term. The governing body has made satisfactory progress in observing lessons jointly with senior leaders and this has resulted in increasing their awareness and understanding of teaching and learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- monitoring the quality of teaching more rigorously so good practice can be identified and weaknesses eliminated by summer 2010 – inadequate

- ensuring there is rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school by senior leaders and governors so that ambition to improve pupils' attainment is evident in higher pupils' attainment by summer 2010 – inadequate
- urgently developing a school improvement plan, based on rigorous and accurate self-evaluation, to tackle the weaknesses in pupils' outcomes which are evident from poor performance through Key Stage 2 – inadequate.

### External support

The local authority has provided satisfactory operational support through a teaching and learning review and the provision of an advanced skills governor who provides critical challenge and support to the governing body. However, the local authority has not taken effective steps to strategically strengthen the capacity of the senior leadership team. There are no links with junior or primary schools that are good or better, so school staff are unable to observe models of good practice.

The statement of action meets most requirements but does not identify clearly measurable outcomes or a timescale that would allow the local authority to monitor rigorously the impact of its actions. The school has too many improvement plans and the actions lack urgency, conciseness and accountability. The school's self-evaluation is currently incomplete. There are currently gaps in the external support available to the school, for instance in assessment processes. Overall, there is a lack of clarity as to how the local authority intends to work with the school and develop increased capacity for the school's headteacher and the governing body. The school does not yet identify clear actions that ensure rapid improvement in the areas of teaching, assessment, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and pupils' progress and attainment. This will be crucial in securing the rapid improvements needed in the school's leadership team and its teachers by the next monitoring visit.

### Priorities for further improvement

- To ensure that the local authority creates greater coherence in external support for the school and monitors the school's leadership and teaching capacity more rigorously.
- To ensure that the senior leadership team, with the local authority
  - streamline and simplify the school improvement plans to ensure greater accountability and timeliness of actions
  - develop robust assessment processes and monitoring of pupil progress by sub levels
  - monitor learning objectives, learning activities and pupil targets to ensure they suit pupils' capabilities and prior attainment and that teachers effectively assess all pupils' understanding during lessons.