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27 March 2010

Mrs Sharon Stone  
Headteacher  
Wirksworth Junior School  
Wash Green  
Wirksworth  
Derbyshire  
DE4 4FD

Dear Mrs Stone

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wirksworth Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 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 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 the 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 Governors and the Strategic Director of Children and Younger Adults for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Wirksworth Junior School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 May 2010

## Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, pupils, the Chair of Governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

## Context

Following the inspection in October 2009, the substantive headteacher immediately took leave of absence. A temporary acting headteacher took up post from 1 January 2010 for the spring and summer terms. The substantive head teacher will not be returning and the governing body is now seeking a replacement. Contingency arrangements are in place to appoint a further temporary acting headteacher if a substantive head has not been appointed by the autumn term. Changes in numbers on role may affect decisions regarding class arrangements for next year, but this had not been finalised at the time of the visit. The local authority is making some improvements to the physical learning environment over the summer.

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

Pupils are making satisfactory progress in lessons and over time, although this has not been good enough to enable all children to reach the levels they were predicted to reach or the levels which they are capable of achieving. The challenge for higher ability pupils has increased as a result of teachers raising expectations and adapting planned work in lessons more precisely to pupils' needs. Pupils' enjoyment of lessons and learning is higher than it was and they confirm that they are more interested in their work and in the activities set – a result of noticeably improved lesson planning and teaching. Staff continue to be focussed on school improvement and are committed to raising pupils' achievement and rates of progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. They have not yet focussed on raising pupils' achievement in reading, which is also below where it should be, but they have identified this as a route to improving writing and a new area of focus. A change to spelling strategies, enriching pupils' vocabulary, and more emphasis on handwriting and presentation, have all contributed to some improvement in pupils' writing. Stronger assessment procedures and consultation with pupils has enabled staff to identify gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge. Although there have been gains in writing and mathematical achievement, there are still significant gender differences in some year groups. Target setting is more refined and there is closer monitoring to identify trends in attainment of groups of pupils and those individuals who are underperforming. These practices are becoming better embedded, but the legacy of underachievement is taking time to overcome.



Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- ensure that pupils consistently reach standards which are commensurate with their capabilities and starting points in writing and mathematics – satisfactory.

### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour remains good across the school. With effective use of support staff and initiatives such as the nurture group aimed at pupils needing additional support, the social integration and emotional well being for a significant minority of pupils has improved significantly since the last visit. There is a very positive climate for learning across the school with virtually no disruptions. Pupils work very purposefully within their lessons and play together well outside the classroom.

### The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching is becoming more consistent across the school and inadequate teaching has virtually been eradicated. Good practice is more evident in lessons and input from local authority consultants, leading teachers from other schools and the subject leaders within the school have had much impact. Staffing instability has caused some loss of momentum to pupils' learning and pupils have found it challenging to adapt to different teaching styles. However, support for temporary staff by the leadership team has been strong and this has minimised some of the disruption. This has also ensured that work continues to be matched to pupils' needs and that there is more consistency within lessons across each year group. The quality of activities has improved overall, although just occasionally these have not been well considered in order to meet the learning objective in particular lessons. Sometimes tasks are too ambitious or still do not challenge pupils enough. Lesson endings sometimes require pupils to think about too many things at once and the focus of what has been learnt is lost. Staff are becoming reflective practitioners. Evaluating lessons and pupils' learning in lessons is common practice. The school's presentation policy has helped to raise expectations and pupils are taking much greater pride in their work, although inconsistencies are still evident. The setting of homework across the school has not been fully addressed as this remains uneven in quality and relevance, both to the curriculum and to individual pupils. The marking of pupils' work makes greater reference to their targets and mostly provides developmental commentary. Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to respond to these comments. The school continues to monitor practice across the school closely. Assessment to support learning is much more reliable and systems are becoming embedded. Pupils contribute through self and peer assessment. Staff are beginning to use the data effectively to influence the setting of targets. Pupils are much clearer about their targets and their next steps for success.

The curriculum remains heavily focussed on the core skills of literacy and numeracy as discrete subjects and the school is now increasingly exploiting opportunities to develop reading, writing and applying mathematics in other subject areas. However



standards in other subjects are not always as consistent as to be found in pupils' writing books. The quality of care, guidance and support is less variable than at the last visit. More training has been provided for support staff who are now fully included in discussions about planning and pupils' progress. The school addresses the needs of those pupils who have a statement for their special educational needs and continues to link effectively with other professionals and outside agencies. The school has improved its target setting for all pupils with an individual education plan, and is now starting to monitor the effectiveness of any interventions they receive and more accurately analyse checking these pupils' progress.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- strengthen assessment procedures – satisfactory.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

The changes to the structure of the leadership team have been beneficial in distributing the workload more evenly and providing mutual support. Teamwork is developing and coordinators are beginning to know and lead their subject areas better. There is a determination to bring about change. Monitoring and evaluation has taken place in literacy and numeracy through scrutiny of planning and pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Monitoring of lessons now includes teaching and learning and systems are more secure since the last visit. Observations made by the senior leadership team and the local authority are accurate. Staff have responded well to areas for improvement. They remain focussed on developing robust assessment procedures and the effective use assessment information to improve teaching and learning. There has been significant staff development in this area and both internal and external moderation to ensure that assessments are accurate and reliable. The school's improvement plan wholly focuses on the areas for improvement identified during the inspection, but this is continually evaluated both for impact and any outstanding actions. The acting headteacher is now better informed and governors are provided with more accurate information about the school's progress. They are actively involved in monitoring this and, consequently, governance continues to go from strength to strength through this greater knowledge and involvement. The school's procedures and recording for safeguarding pupils is now in line with current government regulations, which are met well. Staff and governor awareness on this has been, and continues to be, raised through professional development activities.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management at all levels to maintain relentless and effective focus on increasing the rate of pupils' progress – satisfactory.
- ensure that the current government regulations for safeguarding are fully met by December 2009 – good.

### External support



The external support provided by the local authority is good. Staff have received high quality input from a range of local authority consultants who are developing the staff team and their classroom practices. The consultants are also assisting with developing systems for monitoring teaching and learning more effectively. The local authority has worked most positively with the acting headteacher, which has been instrumental in bringing about change. The schedule of local authority support team meetings has been strictly adhered to, so an accurate overview of the school's progress has been maintained. The local authority continues to maintain a high level of support for the school, which includes support for the school's leadership; staffing; classroom arrangements; buildings and overall school improvement.