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9 December 2011

Mrs Elizabeth Burman  
Headteacher  
Hillside Primary School  
Dyke Drive  
Orpington  
Kent  
BR5 4LZ

Dear Mrs Burman

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hillside Primary School**

Following my visit with Teresa Davies, additional inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 December 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed with prior agreement of the monitoring HMI.

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 and Young People's Services for Bromley.

Yours sincerely

John Kennedy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Accelerate learning and achievement for all pupils so that by the time they leave in Year 6, they are attaining at least the expected standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so more lessons are good and none is inadequate by:
  - checking that work and activities are matched accurately to the needs and abilities of individual pupils
  - ensuring teachers mark work and set personal targets that allow the pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning
  - giving pupils more chance for creative, lively and first-hand experiences.
- Improve levels of attendance to meet the national average for primary schools and reduce persistent absenteeism to the proportion for similar schools by July 2011.
- Develop the role of the middle managers in contributing effectively to school improvement by:
  - boosting their confidence in using assessment data effectively
  - increasing opportunities for them to observe teaching and learning.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Hillside Primary School**

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 December 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They observed 16 part-lessons across all key stages and in the Special Opportunities Unit. Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and other staff, members of the governing body, the local authority's senior education advisor, representatives of the 'parent partnership group' and a group of pupils. During the course of the visit they also spoke informally with staff and pupils.

#### **Context**

The school continues to employ a part-time special educational needs coordinator, and the previous coordinator is now teaching full time. One teacher has left. Another teacher is on maternity leave and her post is being filled by a long-term temporary teacher. Five new governors have joined the governing body, three of whom are parent governors. The school has started to consult on collaboration with a local secondary school in becoming part of their academy status bid.

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

Unvalidated 2011 data published since the last monitoring visit show that the trend of improved attainment for pupils at the end of Year 6 has been sustained. However, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected Level 4 in both English and mathematics was similar to 2010 and below the national average. The school is successfully narrowing the gap between the attainment of pupils and their peers nationally. However, it remains too wide for boys across the school. Standards attained by pupils in Year 2 dipped and this was particularly marked in mathematics. The proportion of pupils who attained the expected Level 2 in reading rose. Current information on pupils' progress shows an increase across the school in the proportion of pupils who are working at levels expected for their ages in English, mathematics and science. This is most evident in reading. However, the attainment levels of different subjects in different year groups remain uneven.

In lessons pupils make steady progress, while many make more rapid strides in their learning. This was because they enjoy and were enthusiastic about what they were doing, and the activities are carefully matched to their abilities. This was demonstrated in most lessons, for example in a literacy lesson where pupils put together the right ingredients to recount a compelling and interesting story. In another lesson, they busily constructed the traditional story of Goldilocks, but with a twist. In the Special Opportunities Unit, pupils make rapid progress as they signed and learnt to say the days of the week, using information and communication

technology to support their learning. Pupils say that teachers make lessons more enjoyable and, as a result, they are learning more. Scrutiny of their work shows that pupils are taking pride in what they do. Current evidence indicates that the focus on pupils' writing is having an impact, and the broader range of opportunities to develop their writing skills in different subjects is working. While many pupils are making faster progress, particularly in reading, the proportion making more rapid gains in literacy and numeracy is variable. For instance, it is slower in Year 6 than in some other year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress than hitherto, and for a number of individuals, this is because of the better match of provision to their particular needs.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- accelerate learning and achievement for all pupils so that by the time they leave in Year 6, they are attaining at least the expected standards in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

The school has successfully sustained high levels of attendance, which for the first half of the autumn term was 96.1%. Although it has dipped slightly since then, current attendance levels represent a marked improvement on the same period last year. This success can be attributed to a number of factors, not least that the pupils enjoy coming to school. Staff are all aware of their role in promoting attendance and responding to absence. This whole-school approach, coupled with targeted action and intervention for particular pupils and their families, is very effective. Pupils are motivated to aim for high levels of attendance by the carefully considered range of incentives and the helpful hints and encouragement provided by the school's very popular 'Spike' character. Pupils behave very well in most lessons and this demonstrates their eagerness to learn and the consistent high expectations of staff.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve levels of attendance to meet the national average for primary schools and reduce persistent absenteeism to the proportion for similar schools by July 2011 – good progress.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching is improving, and even in less well taught lessons, there are a number of positive features. A positive work ethos and a calm atmosphere permeate lessons. In almost all lessons, teachers plan activities suitably shaped to capture pupils' interests and extend their learning. Teachers pay particular attention to planning activities that stimulate boys' interests and therefore their engagement in lessons. Teachers are becoming more confident in their teaching and make good links between different aspects of the curriculum. For instance, in a mathematics

lesson on data handling pupils were given good opportunities to practise and hone their writing skills. Teachers provide more regular written feedback to pupils about their personal targets and the quality of their work.

In better lessons, teachers and teaching assistants use open questions, such as 'why are we collecting this information?' to check on pupils' learning and help them reflect and deepen their understanding. Teachers provide productive opportunities for pupils to learn and work independently. Pupils comment positively on the fact that they are getting more direct help from teachers and other adults. Where teaching is more effective, adults demonstrate skills in working with focus groups of pupils, while at the same time keep an ongoing, radar-like check on the pace and progress of others in the class. Very good practice is evident in some lessons. For example, in a Year 4 English lesson, pupils were keeping track of their own progress by checking how they were doing against descriptors for different levels of work.

Some teaching is not yet at this level and in these lessons pupils are not clear about their targets or levels and the small next steps in their learning. Pupils find it easy to say what they are doing but struggle to explain what they are learning, and they find it difficult to see how their learning can be applied in different contexts. In some lessons, adults are content that pupils have arrived at the right answer, and miss opportunities to help them reflect on the process of getting there.

Marking has improved and much of it helps pupils understand how to modify and reflect on their work. Pupils speak of time in lessons when they are given a chance to go back over and learn from teachers' comments. However, this is inconsistent and some books show limited follow-through on comments by teachers or pupils. The quality of pupils' work is in much evidence in classrooms and around the corridors. Their work shows how well the links are being made across the curriculum. For example, pupils' work in history and geography shows an increased range of opportunities for extended writing, while at the same time developing their environmental awareness.

Progress since the monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so more lessons are good and none is inadequate – satisfactory progress.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Middle managers are now more competent and confident and are exercising effective leadership in their own right. They work as a cohesive team and play a more decisive role in school improvement and planning than they did when the school became subject to special measures. They model good practice and, through their professional conversations with other staff and targeted support, they are helping teachers to improve their practice. They work well with other leaders and use assessment information to track pupils' progress rigorously and accurately and use this to inform group and individual interventions.

The headteacher continues to provide decisive and effective leadership. Along with other leaders and governors she has an accurate grasp of what steps are needed to secure further improvements particularly in the quality of teaching and the consequent progress of pupils. Teachers are increasingly being held to account for the quality of what they do through a range of ways, which include lesson observations and a range of evidence such as face-to-face meetings based on the scrutiny of pupils' work. The school's journey of improvement since becoming subject to special measures is reflected in the very positive responses from the great majority of the 78 parents and carers who recently completed a comprehensive questionnaire. They highlighted particular strengths, such as the approachability of the staff and that their children feel safe and are helped to settle into and enjoy school. Representatives of the parent partnership group endorsed these views. They commented on the hard work of teachers and other staff and the noticeable difference it is making to their children and the school.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- develop the role of the middle managers in contributing effectively to school improvement – good progress.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to regularly monitor the school's progress and provide constructive and helpful support, for instance through its work with particular teachers. Importantly, the balance of who provides the support has shifted. This is reflected in the increasing evidence of the school's capacity to steer and determine the nature and focus for this support and its increasing internal ability to drive improvement.