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12 March 2015

Mr M Snow  
The Headteacher  
Barton Primary School and Early Years Centre  
Green Street  
Newport  
PO30 2AN

Dear Mr Snow

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Barton Primary School and Early Years Centre**

Following my visit with Tracy Hannon, Seconded Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2013. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
  - ensuring teachers are more ambitious for pupils' progress and the quality of the presentation of their work
  - ensuring teachers provide activities which engage pupils' interests, challenge pupils to think hard, make decisions for themselves, and sustain their concentration throughout the lesson
  - making sure that teachers use information about pupils' attainment to plan work that is securely based on their previous learning and is adjusted to meet their varied needs and abilities
  - explaining to pupils what they are expected to achieve in lessons, how they will know they have been successful, and what they can do to aspire to higher levels of achievement
  - checking pupils' progress throughout lessons and adjusting the work if it is too hard or too easy
  - developing the skills of all adults in asking pupils questions that require them to think through their ideas and deepen their understanding
  - ensuring marking tells pupils how their work might be improved and they are given time to respond to teachers' comments and learn from their mistakes
  - clarifying the role of teaching assistants so that they support pupils effectively throughout lessons and promote their ability to work by themselves, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Raise achievement in speaking, reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school by:
  - providing pupils with a good range of opportunities to develop the vocabulary they need to communicate effectively with adults and each other and to enhance their writing
  - reviewing the programme for teaching the sounds letters make (phonics) so that pupils know how to read unfamiliar words successfully, and spell correctly
  - ensuring pupils make good use of the library to read books that are at the right level for them and read widely in different subjects
  - developing a clear programme for teaching mathematics that builds up pupils' knowledge and understanding and offers increasing levels of challenge as pupils move through the school
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to learn and remember their multiplication tables and number bonds
  - teaching pupils the written methods to calculate accurately and solve problems with confidence.
- Ensure that all pupils attend more regularly by working with parents and carers to reduce the number of holidays taken in term time.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, and build the capacity to improve by:
  - drawing up a plan for the long-term development of the school to raise aspirations and ambitions for pupils' attainment
  - revising the short-term improvement plan so it is focused sharply on the improvements needed to increase rates of pupils' progress, and checking that it is having the anticipated impact on pupils' achievements
  - reviewing the structure for the leadership and management of the school so that it is clear who is responsible for what, including the line management of the teaching assistants
  - developing the skills of the subject and key stage leaders so that they contribute fully to the improvement of the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement
  - putting into practice robust appraisal systems so that all staff are held accountable for their contributions to pupils' achievements
  - reviewing the curriculum so that it is broad and balanced and gives due attention to the development of pupils' skills in English and mathematics
  - providing a thorough training programme to raise the skills of all staff in teaching mathematics, the sounds letters make, spoken language and on how best to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

## **Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other staff members, groups of pupils, parents, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also heard pupils read and reviewed pupils' work books. In addition, inspectors took account of the 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, there have been further staffing changes. One teacher left at the end of the autumn term and a second left in February 2015. A new teacher has joined the school and another has returned from maternity leave. A new teacher has been appointed to join the school in April to work with the Reception Year. At present, the Reception children are being taught by a temporary supply teacher.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Pupils' achievement is improving as a result of the actions taken by the senior leaders. However, the rate of progress has been hindered by a legacy of underperformance. To overcome this challenge, the headteacher is showing strong and resilient leadership. He is supported by the commitment of all those working at the school.

Children in the Nursery and the Reception classes make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time they move into Year 1 they are broadly in line with the national average.

To improve pupils' literacy skills, the school's leaders have taken action to promote a consistent approach to teaching phonics (sounds that letters make). Teachers are much more confident to support pupils to sound out letters as they approach unfamiliar words. Teaching assistants also contribute well to this initiative as they take responsibility for working with individual pupils and small groups. This approach helped Year 1 pupils to do well in the 2014 phonic screening test. The school's results were higher than those achieved in 2013, and only slightly below the national average. The impact of this initiative is also helping to raise pupils' overall reading, writing and speaking skills.

The recently introduced Barton Book Club is a new strategy designed to develop pupils' interest and enjoyment in books. Teachers, teaching assistants and other members of staff are reading with groups of pupils on a daily basis. In many instances, this approach is helping pupils to read with expression and to develop their comprehension skills. During these sessions, many of the adults talk to pupils

about unfamiliar words in the books and explore pupils' understanding of their meanings. Those pupils working independently in small groups do so very well. They remain focused and listen attentively to each other reading from texts that have been selected to match their reading abilities. Occasionally, some of those pupils working in larger groups lose interest and do not pay enough attention. As a result, they do not benefit as fully from the activity as intended.

The school's focus on applying a consistent approach to teaching across the school is helping to increase the rate at which pupils learn and raise standards. In 2014, the proportion of Year 2 pupils attaining Level 2 or above in reading and mathematics was much higher than the previous year. Pupils' attainment in writing was largely unchanged from 2013. However, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is one of the reasons why overall attainment remains much lower than the national average, despite the recent improvements.

In 2014, Year 6 pupils' overall attainment was higher than the previous year. This was because the percentage of pupils making at least expected progress increased in reading and mathematics. The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils narrowed for reading and mathematics, while for writing disadvantaged pupils slightly outperformed other pupils.

Importantly, there is an overall improving picture for pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 2. This improvement is because of the intense efforts being made to help pupils make rapid progress as they prepare to transfer to secondary school. However, inspection evidence shows that although pupils are doing well in Year 6 some significant gaps in their education remain. This is because of a legacy of previous inconsistent teaching in younger year groups.

The recent changes are helping to overcome barriers to pupils' learning. Teachers are taking greater care to provide pupils with more opportunities to practise their handwriting and multiplication tables. However, they are not yet ensuring that certain skills are taught and consolidated within specific year groups, thereby not allowing pupils to build on prior learning and improve their mastery of basic skills.

### **The quality of teaching**

Leaders' strong focus on improving the quality of teaching is being successful. There is a greater consistency in the way that teachers now work, which is helping pupils to make faster progress than previously. Lessons start promptly, are well organised and provide activities that link well to pupils' abilities. This approach ensures that pupils maximise their time working in lessons. Teachers take care to explain the focus of each lesson. Pupils enjoy the work set and apply themselves diligently.

The decision to organise classes into smaller teaching groups for English and mathematics enables teachers to provide lessons that are more accurately matched to pupils' abilities. In these situations, pupils benefit from more frequent opportunities to discuss their work with the teacher.

Teachers are increasingly ambitious about what they expect from their pupils. Tasks are suitably challenging. On occasion, teachers make appropriate links between subjects. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils used their mathematical skills well to link with their science work. The task involved drawing line graphs to record the temperature of warm water insulated with different materials. This activity helped pupils to see the relevance of drawing graphs to record and display useful information.

Lessons are organised effectively to allow teachers and teaching assistants to work with target groups and assess pupils' learning. Pupils working independently do so sensibly and get on with their work with minimal intervention from adults.

The work in pupils' books shows that pupils are being suitably challenged and that they are making nationally expected progress. In the majority of cases, teachers' marking is up to date and complies with the school's policy. Comments are often written neatly; but, at times, teachers' writing prevents pupils from understanding the feedback. There is also little evidence to show that pupils are responding to, and benefiting from, teachers' marking. Teachers are not yet ensuring that work in pupils' books complies with the school's presentation policy. As a result, the presentation of some pupils' workbooks is not yet of a high enough standard.

The teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the school by supporting pupils' development. Teachers plan lessons well to maximise the teaching assistants' time. Teaching assistants are often allocated to work with, and support, individual and small groups of pupils, some of whom have special educational needs. In this role, the teaching assistants provide invaluable support and engage pupils very effectively in the activities planned.

During the monitoring inspection, teachers planned lessons that enthused pupils. The inspectors noted that pupils sustained good levels of concentration and were keen to learn. Teachers and teaching assistants used questions well to focus pupils' attention and direct their learning.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

There is a welcoming atmosphere at the school. The headteacher has succeeded in promoting a culture where pupils feel valued and respected. Staff know the pupils well. As a result, pupils live up to the expectations that they will behave well in school. They are friendly and keen to talk about their school, of which they are very proud.

Pupils behave very well in lessons. They listen carefully to instructions and work diligently on the activities set. They cooperate with one another, sharing ideas and resources sensibly. They take good care of school resources and look after their workbooks.

On the playground, pupils enjoy being together. There is a wide range of playground equipment, which they appreciate. Break times are well supervised, which encourages pupils to play together respectfully and to care for the equipment. Pupils describe behaviour as being good and they feel confident that if they have an accident or are picked on then the adults will sort things out.

The school is well looked after. The playground is largely litter free as pupils take care to look after their school. Although classrooms are well organised to facilitate teaching, they sometimes lack displays that are a powerful celebration of pupils' work.

The school's breakfast club is organised appropriately to provide pupils with a good start to the day. Similarly, lunch time provides pupils with time to socialise with friends.

The school has made good progress improving pupils' attendance so that it is now broadly in line with the national average. Girls' attendance has been a cause for concern but, as a result of the school's efforts, this issue has largely been resolved. Following a number of illnesses during the autumn term, the school did see a slight fall in attendance before it returned to the levels expected. Pupils enjoy school and want to attend. There is now a trend showing a reduction in the number of exclusions at the school and an improvement in pupils' punctuality.

Pupils feel safe at school. The school's initiatives to promote safety are being effective. Pupils who are the school's anti-bullying ambassadors are proud of their role and they take a lead in promoting tolerance.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Since the last monitoring inspection, the school's leadership team has continued to strengthen. The headteacher is providing strong leadership and taking the decisions needed to improve the quality of education. He is supported well by the leadership team and the school's IEB.

The headteacher has a very accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. He is very aware of the challenges that the school continues to face. The school's improvement plan is detailed and focuses on the relevant areas that need to be strengthened. It also sets out the different actions that are being introduced to ensure that the school meets its stated aims.

The senior leaders hold teachers to account for the quality of their work. As a result of leaders challenging teachers to improve their performance, some staff have left since the school was judged to require special measures. To employ teachers of the calibre needed, the headteacher has shown initiative and tenacity in attracting some strong candidates to apply for teaching vacancies. As a consequence, leaders have strengthened the quality of teaching, which is helping to ensure that pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate.

The senior leaders are growing in confidence as they take on additional responsibilities and support the school's improvement work. In addition to monitoring their respective subjects, they have responsibility for managing teachers' performance. To do so they are gathering evidence of pupils' progress but, as yet, they are not observing lessons to assess how well recently introduced initiatives are working.

The leader with responsibility for pupils with special educational needs contributes to a wide range of initiatives that are supporting pupils' learning. In order to make best use of her skills, the headteacher has recently reviewed her role and responsibilities. These changes are part of the overall plan to develop and improve the skills of middle leaders at the school. The plan also includes providing professional development opportunities for teachers to gain leadership skills and experience.

As a result of recent changes, morale at the school is strong as staff see the positive impact of their work. Pupils and parents are also aware of the improvements taking place and they take pride in seeing the school improve.

As a priority, the senior leaders have focused their attention on raising standards in English and mathematics. There is a much greater awareness about the importance of pupils building on previous learning. Leaders have introduced strategies to ensure pupils learn basic reading, writing and number skills early, which can be developed and extended as pupils move through the school.

The IEB is crucial to the school's work. The members of the IEB provide strong support to the school and, at the same time, are robust in challenging the school's leaders about their improvement plans. The IEB members are very knowledgeable about the school's progress as they ask demanding questions and hold staff to account. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

The work completed to date demonstrates that the school's leadership has a growing capacity to improve the school. Many of the actions taken so far are showing some positive signs of success. The standards pupils achieve are improving and pupils' attendance is rising. However, the leadership acknowledges that further improvement is still required. Work to strengthen the quality of teaching in the Reception Year is nearing completion and there is a clear and appropriate focus on ensuring that there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching across all year groups.

### **External support**

The local authority recognises that the school is strengthening its leadership capacity and taking increased ownership of its future. As a result, the local authority is reducing the level of support it provides, which acknowledges the school's growing self-reliance. The local authority's regular visits and progress reports confirm that the



school is moving in the right direction and, although there is still further work to be done, recognises the successes that have been achieved.