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13 July 2007

Mr K Grayson  
The Headteacher  
Elston Hall Primary School  
Stafford Road  
Fordhouses  
Wolverhampton  
West Midlands  
WV10 6NN

Dear Mr Grayson

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of Elston Hall Primary School

### Introduction

Following my visit with Ken Buxton HMI and Gail Robertson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 July 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, senior staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

The acting headteacher took up the post permanently at Easter. Two teachers have left the school. During the inspection, most pupils in Year 5 were on a residential visit.

### Achievement and standards

Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 have risen and the results of national tests are higher than the school was originally predicting. The headteacher's belief that teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 were overly cautious proved to be correct. The proportions of pupils reaching or exceeding the national expectation of Level 2b were similar to last year and there were increases in the proportions reaching the higher Level 3. At Key Stage 2, the school has received the provisional results of the national tests in science, which are much better than last year, particularly at the higher Level 5. Based on the teachers' latest assessments, the results in English and mathematics are also expected to show similar improvements.

The school's own data, based on termly assessments, shows that pupils in most year groups are making increasingly secure progress. In several year groups, especially Years 2 and 6, the pupils are making up ground at a fast rate. The pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4, however, is patchy and in some instances poor. Across the school, progress in lessons continues to vary widely but is improving as teachers focus more effectively on what pupils need to learn.

In the Foundation Stage, children continue to make a good start which prepares them well for Key Stage 1. Although their subsequent progress is improving, standards in some basic skills remain below average higher up the school and the pupils' achievement from their starting points is not yet satisfactory.

### Personal development and well-being

The pupils continue to behave well and are extremely polite and welcoming. They have very positive attitudes to learning and their relationships with adults and each other are good. Inspectors observed many instances of pupils acting in a mature and responsible manner, such as offering help unasked in the dining room and supporting less able pupils in lessons. The school and pupils report that conduct at playtime has improved as a result of the attention which this area has been given; minor accidents have reduced. Behaviour was outstanding in two assemblies held during the monitoring inspection.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved substantially since the last visit and the profile of teaching seen by the inspectors tallies closely with the school's and the LA's own evaluations. Over half of the lessons seen were good or better and nearly all were at least satisfactory. In the two instances of inadequate teaching, time was not used efficiently and pupils made insufficient progress. However, many more teachers now have high expectations about what the pupils are to achieve and are planning suitably challenging activities to foster good progress. Teachers showed greater confidence in several ways: tasks were more imaginative and better matched to pupils' interests; explanations were clear and precise; questioning drew out pupils' understanding effectively; and, lessons were well paced and stimulating. The

contribution of teaching assistants has become more assured. Their numbers have increased and teachers are making better use of their support.

Lessons in mathematics and science have benefited from specific support for these subjects from the LA's consultants as well as from the school's broader focus on general teaching skills.

The health and safety issues raised in the section 5 inspection report have been resolved satisfactorily. Work to be carried out on the boiler house is in hand and will be completed over the summer. The school provides a safe and caring environment and all required procedures are in place.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2006:

- ensure that procedures for safeguarding pupils are implemented rigorously – satisfactory
- ensure teachers set suitably challenging tasks for pupils and increase the progress made in lessons, especially in mathematics and science – satisfactory.

#### Leadership and management

The headteacher's arrival on a permanent basis has been welcomed by parents, teachers, governors and pupils, all of whom report that the school is well managed under his steady influence. He has provided clear direction on most matters to his senior staff about the roles they need to play and is delegating responsibility to great effect. The deputy headteacher has worked effectively on safeguarding and health and safety issues and is beginning to develop aspects of her wider leadership role, for example responsibility for inclusion and extended school provision. The coordinators for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are playing an increasingly confident and important role in identifying areas to tackle and taking initiatives forward. The headteacher's and LA's regular and systematic monitoring of teaching has given the school a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate action is being taken to focus support and training where they are required most. Morale is good and the staff are keen to play their part in improving the school. The governors have an ambitious vision for the school and are undertaking relevant training, for example on assessment data, which is giving them greater confidence in their ability to evaluate the school's progress.

The coordinator for assessment is working hard to ensure that data is gathered in a manageable way and used to best effect. A reasonable start has been made on identifying pupils who appear to be underachieving and devising a suitable response. The school, however, is still at the early stages of drawing together assessment information in an accessible format for a range of different audiences and being clear about who is responsible for which element. The presentation of performance data for whole school evaluation currently lacks some coherence. Data about the pupils' progress from the end of the Foundation Stage through Key Stage 1, for example, is not readily available and the school has relied on the LA to synthesise findings about

progress elsewhere through the school. Furthermore, the school's action plan and those of the subject coordinators lack targets defined sharply in terms of the desired impact of actions on the progress of specific groups of pupils. The headteacher is aware that this area of management is now a pressing priority.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2006:

- carry out more rigorous monitoring of teaching to identify exactly where weaknesses lie. Draw up and implement plans to rectify the weaknesses – good.

#### External support

The local authority responded vigorously and effectively to the points made in the last monitoring letter. Swift action was taken, for example, to remedy the lack of progress on some of the health and safety issues. The LA has made strenuous efforts to provide extensive support through its consultants, which has been welcomed and beneficial. Judgements about the school's progress are accurate and the quality of support is good. The LA now needs to allow the school to develop more independence in pursuing its programme of improvement.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since previous monitoring visit – good.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- The school and LA need to consider the balance of challenge and support which will best allow the school to improve under its own leadership.
- Clarify the way assessment data needs to be managed and used.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Wolverhampton.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Hubbleday". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rob Hubbleday  
H M Inspector