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24 January 2014

Mr Matthew Ascroft  
Headteacher  
Heronswood Primary School  
Heronswood Road  
Kidderminster  
DY10 4EX

Dear Mr Ascroft

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Heronswood Primary School**

Following my visit with Rowena Green, Additional Inspector, to your school on 22–23 January 2014, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 21 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 not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection without speaking to me in the first instance.

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 Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims  
**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 pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that accurate assessment information is used to plan lessons that will effectively meet the learning needs of all pupils
  - developing staff's use of questions to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding
  - ensuring teachers increase the pace of lessons to make the most of learning time
  - ensuring teachers show pupils how to improve their work through good quality marking, and give them the time to respond to their comments.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management by:
  - increasing the capacity of the senior leadership team to share the responsibility for the performance of the school
  - ensuring that subject leaders develop the curriculum so that it broadens and extends pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects
  - taking steps to address the gaps in learning for all pupils so that they quickly make up for previous underachievement
  - developing the governing body's monitoring procedures so that it can rigorously hold school leaders to account.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22–23 January 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and other staff, groups of pupils and parents, members of the governing body including the Chair, and a representative from the local authority.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring visit there have been a number of changes in teaching staff affecting four classes. A new leader of phonics was appointed for December 2013.

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

In the most recent test results and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 standards were low in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels was low in all subjects. The attainment of pupils eligible for support from pupil premium funding was in line with that of their peers nationally. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs did not do as well as similar pupils when compared to the national average. The percentage of pupils who made or exceeded expected progress from the end of Key Stage 1 was below average in all subjects, but particularly in writing.

School data for the autumn term 2013 indicate that pupils have made good progress in reading and mathematics in all year groups. In writing, all pupils have made either good or expected progress during the term. At current rates of progress, pupils in Year 6 are set to achieve above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the academic year. Pupils have made good progress from their very low starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of the high quality of provision and detailed tracking of their development.

In lessons seen most pupils achieved well. Where pupils' progress required improvement it was always in literacy lessons, in both Key Stages 1 and 2. Not all pupils made enough progress in their writing, either because tasks lacked sufficient challenge for more-able pupils or because there was not enough time to complete tasks.

### **The quality of teaching**

The majority of teaching seen during the inspection visit was good. In the best mathematics teaching, pupils were given activities that had a real purpose to them.

For example, in a Year 5 lesson pupils were fully occupied calculating menu prices in a restaurant. Teachers planned for open-ended tasks in writing which enabled different groups of pupils to achieve well. Teachers asked searching questions to check pupils' knowledge and plan next steps in learning. Pupils were kept on their toes and not allowed to switch off from their learning. Additional adults were deployed well to support individuals who found learning difficult without completing the task for them. The best marking allowed pupils to respond to teachers' comments or extension tasks. Pupils' responses were then in turn followed up by teachers.

No lessons seen were inadequate. In those which required improvement, teachers took too long to introduce activities and this left insufficient time for writing. The role of additional adults was not clear when teachers spoke to the whole class, and lesson planning gave little detail of their role even when supporting a target group or individual. Where pupils were given writing frames to support their construction of sentences more-able pupils received the same task, which did not sufficiently challenge them. Although teachers generally conformed to the school policy of marking in green and pink pens, pupils did not always respond to comments and when they did, teachers did not always acknowledge their responses.

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

Pupils behaved well around the school. In lessons the very large majority showed interest and enthusiasm for their learning and cooperated well with each other. Very occasionally some boys lost focus if an activity went on for too long without an adult intervening, but this did not lead to any disruption of classes. Pupils are looked after well and feel safe and secure in school. All safeguarding requirements are met. Attendance is broadly average. It improved in 2013 and figures for this year to date indicate that it is improving further. The school has successfully reduced the rate of persistent absence through regular contact with identified families, including individual meetings between parents and the headteacher.

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

The headteacher and senior leaders have worked relentlessly to ensure the school has the capacity to make improvements in teaching and achievement. Regular checking of lessons by leaders has led to the removal of inadequate teaching through staffing departures or improvements to teaching. Consequently the proportion of teaching that is good or better is now much higher than it was in September 2013. Achievement data have been used extensively by leaders to track the progress of pupils in each teaching group, broken down by pupil groups. This has enabled leaders to identify areas of relative underperformance in writing. Leaders hold individual teachers to account through pupil progress meetings. Regular progress checks in mathematics have enabled leaders to check where pupils have gaps in their learning and how to address them.

Middle leaders are showing emerging strengths in their roles, some having very recently taken up their posts. They are at different stages of development in the extent to which they have directly observed teaching and analysed achievement data in their area of responsibility. They all have clear action plans and identified priorities for the future.

Governors, including parent governors, have a good understanding of the strengths and weakness of the school in teaching and achievement. They challenge leaders through scrutinising information in committees, and have set up a detailed monitoring and evaluation programme for focused visits to school including the observation of teaching.

Most of the small number of parents spoken to during the visit were happy with improvements in the school, particularly in teaching and leadership, but a few felt communication could be improved further.

Pupils report that they have a wider range of subjects through the topics and themes such as invaders and settlers. They were enthused by science experiments with circuits and an outside project to build a shelter. Older pupils, however, reported that they no longer study a language. Both parents and pupils reported that there is a narrow range of clubs, particularly sports teams, although the dance club is well attended.

### **External support**

The local authority has continued to provide an extensive range of challenging support through a regular programme of visits. Advisers have supported the school's work on the curriculum, special educational needs and literacy in upper Key Stage 2, which has contributed to rapid progress in the writing of older pupils.