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Mr Mike Wooler  
Acting headteacher  
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SR5 5QL

Dear Mr Wooler

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hylton Red House Primary School**

Following my visit with Jackie Barnes Additional Inspector, to your school on 30 June-1 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **satisfactory**

Newly qualified teachers - **may not be appointed.**

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Sunderland LA.

Yours sincerely

Moirá Fitzpatrick

**Additional Inspector**

## **Special measures: monitoring of Hylton Red House Primary School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 30 June-1 July 2009**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, core subject leaders, members of the post-Ofsted committee of governors and the local authority representative. Meetings were also held with a local consultant headteacher and a visiting language consultant. Twelve lessons or parts of lessons were observed. School data and pupils' work were scrutinised in lessons and a separate sample was seen for writing and mathematics.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit in March 2009, there have been further changes to staffing. At the time of this visit, five staff were away from school on long term absence, two of whom were replaced by supply staff. One Year 1 class has had three different teachers in the current school year. A Year 4 teacher has returned to school and Year 6 are being taught in two instead of three classes, so that a teacher is released to give additional support in Year 4. Pupils in the Language Unit have been taught by a supply teacher for much of this term.

The school has worked closely with the local authority to reduce staffing for next year and has secured an appropriate number of teachers and teaching assistants for the next school year. The local authority is awaiting permission to appoint an interim executive board (IEB) to replace the governing body and has begun the process of appointing a substantive headteacher.

#### **Achievement and standards**

Standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception class) have risen sharply in all areas of learning since the last visit. They are broadly average and all children have made good progress. In Years 1 and 2 pupils' progress is more consistent as a result of improvements to the assessment of their learning. The majority of Year 2 pupils have reached the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Several pupils reached the higher level in mathematics, though none did in reading and writing. There is a similar picture of overall improvement in pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 classes. Inconsistencies are less marked within year groups so that pupils of the same age are making similar progress. Progress is still strongest in Years 3 and 6 where pupils' progress is secure because of effective use of assessment for planning their learning. Unvalidated results in this year's national tests show that Year 6 pupils have met the most challenging targets set for them in reading, writing and science. Results in writing match those in reading and have risen by 20 percentage points over last year's results. The school attributes this improvement to its focus on more effective strategies for teaching writing and more effective use of assessment throughout this year. Inspectors agree with the school's

view. Science results are close to average at the expected level, though only a few pupils reached the higher level. School data indicate that pupils are on course to reach their challenging targets in mathematics, though results have not yet been received to confirm this. While there has been a number of positive improvements, not all pupils achieve as well as they should. This is because of some remaining inconsistencies in teaching the basic skills, and because some pupils are still on catch up, filling gaps from previous inadequate learning.

While progress continues to accelerate, there is still a need for pupils to have more opportunities to consolidate their basic skills by applying them in all areas of their learning to increase their rate of progress even further, and ensure that new learning is retained. Planned revisions to the curriculum are designed to ensure that, in the next school year, pupils will have more opportunities to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils in the Language Unit are making good progress in the acquisition of communication and social skills. An external review and expert support from a language consultant have pinpointed where and how provision should be improved. These recommendations have been adopted fully so that pupils are rapidly gaining confidence and showing high levels of enjoyment in their learning.

### **Personal development and well-being**

Pupils continue to behave well and enjoy very good relationships with each other and with staff. They are always keen to work hard and show great pride in their achievements. Changes to the curriculum and better use of assessment by teachers have led to an increase in their enjoyment of learning this term. Pupils from different year groups agree that learning is 'fun' and that there are more opportunities to work with a friend or 'find out for yourself'. There are no exclusions and pupils' enthusiasm for school is seen in their regular attendance and good punctuality. Pupils are better prepared for their future than formerly, and older pupils show good citizenship skills through their roles in supporting younger children and in helping as playground pals.

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching is improving and is more consistent across the school. This is because there has been a sustained focus on improving teachers' assessment skills and their use of assessment information to plan lessons. In all classes pupils benefit from being told what they are going to learn and how they can tell if they have been successful. This is leading to a sharper focus on the work of different ability groups, and in all classes there is a range of tasks which broadly match pupils' needs. Pupils are involved regularly in tracking their progress towards individual targets and they say this helps them improve on their own. However, while better assessment information is showing that there is often a much wider range of attainment within classes than is usually seen, the school has not yet had time to devise strategies to manage the learning of all pupils equally well. In most classes, teaching is most effective for average attaining pupils because the direct teaching and the tasks set

are well matched to their needs. For the highest and lowest attaining pupils, opportunities are missed to provide precision teaching which would enable them to work at a good pace and independently. Higher attaining pupils sometimes spend too much time listening to explanations of things they already know, while lower attaining pupils are grappling with explanations that are too difficult for them. While teachers' assessment skills have shown a marked improvement since the last visit there is still some way to go in improving the accuracy of assessment so it captures secure learning and can identify where further consolidation of skills is needed. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching and learning, and the provision for different ability groups, are improving as a result of teachers' willingness to take on new initiatives and develop as reflective professionals. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the visit, there was an increase in the proportion of good teaching and many satisfactory lessons contained good features.

A school-wide review of the curriculum, supported by a consultant headteacher has taken place since the last visit. This has given staff and pupils the opportunity to have a voice in shaping the direction of change. There has been a good focus on providing more regular opportunities to consolidate and develop basic skills in other subjects. Initial changes this term have been successful in giving pupils a fresh context for their communication and numeracy skills. Their enthusiasm has been fired by the environmental theme which has led them down many new paths of learning, including the preparation of the end of year show around the same theme. Good quality displays of pupils' work are testimony to the enthusiasm of staff and pupils for the new curriculum. There are plans to develop the curriculum further in the next school year, with senior managers rightly keen to ensure small steps of change so that staff are not overwhelmed by innovation and that tracking and recording progress in basic skills are manageable.

Intensive support and training for Early Years Foundation Stage staff have led to good improvements in provision. All areas of learning are well planned so that children are excited about their learning. Outdoor provision is good, with an excellent range of resources for learning and well targeted interventions by adults. Investigative and observational activities are good, with children thoroughly enjoying their learning around a central theme. Lovely pictures and lively writing were produced about ladybirds, while outdoors other children explored the grounds looking for tiny creatures. There is a real buzz of excitement about learning which is shared by staff and children. Leadership and management are good and the staff's positive response to support and development has led to a strong and effective team who work very well together for the benefit of the children.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improving the overall quality of the teaching so that it accelerates learning – **satisfactory**
- Increasing the accuracy of assessment – **satisfactory**
- Adapting the curriculum so that it better meets the learning needs of the pupils – **satisfactory**

## Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has led much well-targeted improvement since the last visit. He has a clear vision for what the school can achieve and has won the trust and support of staff to move the school forward. Together with the acting deputy headteacher and core subject leaders, the headteacher has implemented improvements to teaching and learning which have ensured a satisfactory level of progress across both key stages. His enlistment of support and advice from the local authority and other agencies has resulted in significant improvement to provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Language Unit. Working closely with the governors and the local authority, the acting headteacher has successfully reduced surplus staffing for the next school year. The role of core subject leaders has developed well. They are skilled at monitoring and evaluating provision in their subjects and have a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in provision. Together with the deputy headteacher, core subject leaders have developed comprehensive data on standards and progress in the school. They have provided challenge to staff to improve the rigour and accuracy of their assessment and while this still has some way to go, current data provide a broadly accurate picture of attainment across the school and within classes. Core subject leaders are well prepared to take on an extended role in identifying and implementing change to promote the school's vision for improvement. For example, they are well placed to lead curriculum developments to extend the use of basic skills in subjects. This is a necessary step in the school's development of internal leadership and management skills.

A much clearer sense of direction and coherence are evident in the school than was seen at the last visit. The school is developing a positive 'can do' ethos because of the sensitive and assured leadership of the headteacher. Clear expectations of change and well-targeted support have resulted in good teamwork at all levels. Staff have become more confident and aware of how improvements are affecting standards and progress.

Governors have continued to give good support to the school and have been involved in the appointment process for a substantive headteacher. They have taken the initiative to make stronger links with parents and have had a very positive response to a recent questionnaire about where parents would like to see improvements. This, and the recent open day for parents, is reviving their connection with and support for the school. Parents were very pleased to have the opportunity to visit the school and see their children at work. Their comments, including: 'I was very proud of my child's progress' and 'impressed with the teachers' ability to capture children's attention', reflect growing support for the school and a willingness to be involved in their children's education.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Increasing the effectiveness of leadership and management, including developing the monitoring and evaluation skills of leaders and managers – **satisfactory**

## **External support**

The local authority's well targeted and expert support for the Early Years Foundation Stage has brought about rapid and secure improvement to provision. This has been effective in raising standards to broadly average for the youngest children. It also marks a significant step forward in raising standards in the main school, because children now have a good foundation for the next phase of their learning. A rigorous and far reaching review of provision in the Language Unit, arranged by the local authority, has helped to transform provision. Expert and sustained support from an external language consultant has rapidly developed this provision so that it is good. Pupils from the unit are making good progress in basic skills and life skills, and are well prepared for transition to mainstream settings. Well-targeted support for teaching in the main school has continued and this has had positive impact on teachers' subject knowledge, which is helping to improve learning. The local authority has made arrangements for an IEB and the appointment process for a substantive headteacher has been implemented.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Extend the use of information on the range of attainment in each class to organise and plan teaching for different groups of pupils.
- Further improve the accuracy and range of teachers' assessments so that senior managers have clear picture of secure learning and progress based on a wider range of evidence than at present.
- Review and develop policies for teaching and learning, and assessment and marking so that they reflect the changing needs of the school and make use of the good practice that is developing.