



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

FORWARD

FROM

SPECIAL

MEASURES

A report from the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

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PREFACE

1. The School Inspections Act 1996, requires Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) to arrange for the inspection of all schools. Inspectors must consider the standard of education provided by a school and if the judgement is made that the school is failing or likely to fail to provide an acceptable standard of education, and HMCI agrees, the school is made subject to special measures. The governors of the school then prepare an action plan to address the key issues in the published report.
2. A school subject to special measures receives a visit from Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) from OFSTED's School Improvement Division about once a term until it is providing an acceptable standard of education, when special measures are removed, or the school closes. During these monitoring visits, HMI evaluate the standards being achieved, the progress made by the pupils and the quality of education being provided, The progress made in addressing the key issues is also assessed.
3. When special measures are removed, HMI no longer visit the school each term and the high levels of support which were provided by others for the school, are scaled down. This report examines how schools become increasingly self-sufficient in the immediate period following the removal of special measures.

INTRODUCTION

4. The report, *Lessons learned from special measures* (OFSTED, 1999, ref HMI 176), describes the process of improvement of schools in special measures, identifying and describing the features that have helped schools achieve success. The common aim for all these schools is to improve, making better provision for their pupils, and have special measures removed as quickly as possible. Nevertheless, coming out of special measures and moving on brings with it a new set of challenges in maintaining a forward momentum to school improvement and ensuring self-sufficiency.
5. This report examines some of the challenges faced by schools when special measures have been removed, and the reactions and responses of the key players in sustaining the school's improvement: the staff of the school, governors, parents, pupils and local education authorities (LEAs). It discusses the different strategies employed to maintain progress during the first 12 months after special measures have been removed in an attempt to indicate what works.
6. The survey gathered evidence from schools across England. They were chosen from the primary, secondary and special sectors and include schools of all sizes and locations. All the schools and LEAs were visited by HMI and evidence gathered from headteachers, governors, senior staff, representatives of the LEA, and where applicable, the diocese. Additional evidence was used from the inspection of schools at the point at which special measures were removed and when schools and LEAs discussed arrangements for further improvement.

THE SCHOOLS' RESPONSE

Immediate reactions to good news

7. In order to investigate how schools move forward, and the impact that the experience of being in special measures has had on a school, it is important to appreciate the reactions of all those involved when a school is removed from special measures. There are some fairly predictable reactions: relief, elation, recognition of success, euphoria, pride and delight at having all the hard work rewarded. Comments from individual schools are typified by:

- *“the recognition of our efforts and improvements has been important”*;
- *“pleased about having received the seal of approval”*;
- *“the emergence of individuals being stronger because of special measures”*;
- *“we can hold our heads up high again”*;
- *“the stigma and shame has been removed”*;
- *“felt like reaching the tape at the end of a long race”*;
- *“feel I can cope with anything having survived the ultimate”*.

However, the reaction was not always entirely positive. Some teachers did not share the same sense of elation. For them their weaknesses and shortcomings had been a cause for concern during the period of special measures and, depending on their success, still held out the prospect of further monitoring and pressure to reach the acceptable standards of their colleagues.

8. Once the initial delight of having special measures removed had subsided there were some realities to be faced. For many staff the sudden lifting of externally imposed deadlines created new anxieties. There was the nagging feeling of having to keep proving their worth both to the world around, and, more critically, to themselves. There was a concern that the improvements made may not be secure enough to sustain progress, for example new planning strategies, new schemes of work, or the quality of teaching. The deadlines imposed by external termly monitoring now had to be replaced with others created by themselves and staff felt anxious about maintaining a suitable pace and momentum.

9. Without exception, schools experienced some form of lull in the momentum, some inertia which unsettled staff. Its length varied from a matter of a few days to a number of weeks. Yet in all cases it proved to be a temporary phase, and one after which staff felt a resurgence of energy and a confidence to continue improvements.

10. All of these initial reactions to the removal of special measures subsided over the immediate weeks and months. Generally, it became apparent that the side-effects, far

from being detrimental, were instrumental in forming the base from which the school was able not only to maintain their hard won achievements, but also to build upon them.

- *“The staff became a stronger team; they displayed an urgency to achieve excellence”;*
- *“we built upon the largely improved planning systems”;*
- *“I became confident, pro-active, and staff enjoyed their work more”;*
- *“things became more enjoyable now that we were backed up by the seal of approval”.*

Parents

11. Schools report that the majority of parents showed little interest in the removal of special measures. There were a few schools which received letters of thanks or personal congratulations, but on the whole, parents took the news of the school's success in their stride. In some cases, parents had not agreed that the school should have been put into special measures in the first place because the school was perceived to be caring, and so were not surprised when it came out: they saw it as a vindication of their original view. In other schools, where pupils' behaviour had been a cause for concern, parents had tended to be more aware of behavioural issues than weaknesses in progress and standards so that when behaviour improved and subsequently the school was removed from special measures, parents saw it as the end of a process, not necessarily the beginning of a new phase. In these circumstances, parental involvement and interest quickly reverted to what it was before special measures were applied.

12. There were some indisputable outcomes linked to data. Twelve months on, schools whose National Curriculum test results had shown great improvement and who had moved up the local tables, benefited from renewed and increased interest from prospective parents. One school now has a full nursery unit; other primary schools report waiting lists where there had been vacancies; and some schools report that children stay on into reception and Key Stage 1 classes when previously they would have transferred to other neighbouring schools. Secondary schools report increased numbers in their Year 7 intakes. For one secondary school the change from being last choice and half empty to being over-subscribed and having a waiting list for Year 7 was a clear mark of its success, while in an independent special school, parents nationally are now anxious to gain places for their children to take advantage of the sharpened expertise displayed in the care and education of pupils with particular special needs.

Pupils

13. Pupils' responses to the removal of special measures showed very wide variation, often linked, understandably, to their age. The most noteworthy responses

were those related to pride and improved behaviour. In a secondary school where behaviour had been poor but had improved through the period of special measures, the gains were maintained. In another school where behaviour had been a serious problem, pupils are now returning from sports fixtures with disparaging remarks about the behaviour of pupils from other schools rather than being the focus of unenviable comments themselves. Elsewhere, pupils continued to respond well to the efforts of the staff to provide more interesting and challenging work, allowing pupils to take a full part in lessons and contributing ideas and opinions; as one child commented "*exciting things happen now*". Once pupils' expectations were raised, staff and pupils alike have been keen to maintain those standards and apply them to a range of situations.

Staff

14. In the months immediately following the removal of special measures, it is important for schools to establish priorities, which for many continue and extend those already set, but for a few might require at least one new direction. New initiatives need to complement the progress already made and reflect the capacity of staff to implement them. So a first step in nearly all schools is to maintain and develop teachers' confidence, building on the skills each one has acquired and enabling as many as possible to aspire to even higher levels of effectiveness. Nearly all schools comment on the strengthening of a work ethic and a culture surrounding improvement which, over the months, becomes so embedded in each member of staff that teachers feel more able to be creative about how they teach and are prepared to take informed risks and try out fresh ideas. Examples of developments include introducing setting for literacy and numeracy lessons, engaging more fully in professional debate with colleagues, and being more assured when involving pupils in the conduct of a lesson. A major objective for many schools is to consolidate the proportion of satisfactory or better teaching and then aim for a higher proportion of good or better teaching. All of these developments and further improvements take place during the first 12 months after special measures are removed. The most dramatic improvements over time have been in planning, understanding and applying the principle of breadth, balance and progression in the curriculum, examining subject content in a way that promotes matching work to pupils' different needs, and establishing ways of assessing pupils using a wide range of data.

15. Some schools, but not all, experience difficulties in the recruitment and retention of staff. One widely held belief that teachers are unwilling to teach in such schools is generally unfounded. Indeed the opposite is more often likely to be the case. The schools are seen to have effective procedures and structures which have been proved to work, and therefore attract candidates who are keen to have experience of working in such schools. Under these circumstances, there is often a better qualified and more appropriately motivated field of candidates. Nevertheless, there are different stories to tell.

"An inner city primary school requiring a deputy headteacher had to advertise on two occasions. There were no candidates from the 'home' LEA because the headteacher felt the school had already gained a reputation as being difficult and, coupled with the pressures of special measures, this made the school an unattractive proposition. Other candidates lacked the necessary qualities. The first advertisement failed to indicate the school's current position, but when advertising for a second time, the fact that the school had been in special measures

but successfully had them removed was made clear. There was an increase in the number of applicants and selection proved difficult, but this time, due to the high calibre of the candidates and therefore too many to choose from."

16. Generally, evidence suggests that when special measures have been removed the promotion prospects of teachers are enhanced. Their new found or finely-honed skills are regarded as a desirable attribute when seeking a new post. Such teachers are seen to have been the beneficiaries of good quality advice and intensive professional development covering a wide range of topics of current interest. As time goes by, and teachers' skills continue to develop, several remarked that when they attended LEA courses they suddenly found themselves more advanced in their thinking and practice about issues such as benchmarking, target-setting and monitoring, than their colleagues from other schools, including those deemed to be good schools.

Raising standards further

17. In the months after the removal of special measures, continuing the professional development of the staff is important in raising standards further. At the heart of a school's endeavours lies the desire to make the most of the potential that each child brings to school, and to raise and maintain standards. By the time special measures are removed, most schools have established a range of strategies to tackle their weaknesses and they know what still needs to be achieved. Immediately after special measures many schools need to establish the most efficient ways of ensuring further improvement takes place by setting an agenda which reflects priorities.

18. The areas for further development usually hold no surprises. It is common for schools to continue to improve the quality of teaching; sharpen the interpretation of the curriculum through subject and lesson objectives; match work ever more closely to pupils' needs; establish practical ways of monitoring pupils' progress; and have management structures that reflect individual responsibilities and allow changes to take place.

19. Schools find that the lifting of the pressure which being in special measures brings, allows teachers to look more objectively at their performance. Schools continue to refine planning structures and link them to curricular models which provide sufficient detail and guidance to meet the particular needs of their teachers. Such schools have seen significant gains in the quality of teaching. A headteacher commented that:

"the quality of teaching has improved beyond recognition. It has been a long process that began with planning and has continued well after the removal of special measures with the refinement of curriculum documentation". Schools should not be satisfied with satisfactory, but now aim for the good and very good teaching.

20. Much energy after special measures is invested in refining and extending teachers' awareness of how the content, lesson by lesson, increases pupils' learning incrementally, and reflects the requirements of the subject. This is achieved by continuing to build up teachers' familiarity and confidence with detailed schemes of work and by establishing ways of matching tasks and activities to simple learning objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation

21. Work usually needs to be done by the headteacher and senior management team to take on a greater role in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance when external monitoring reduces. Several headteachers have continued the monitoring procedures set up during special measures because they provide good, detailed evidence and include not only classroom observations, but monitoring of teachers' planning and pupils' workbooks. The following are examples of what works well. In one primary school the special measures process encouraged senior and middle managers to set their own agendas for improvement. Each subject co-ordinator was expected to produce a development plan and to include targets for improvement. Linked to this was an allocation of 19 hours per year for each co-ordinator to analyse progress within his or her subject. In a secondary school middle managers received training in monitoring, the use of data, and setting targets for individual teachers in their departments, so as to complement the overall evaluation processes established by the headteacher. A primary school with a number of weaknesses in its teaching, orientated its monitoring programme so that the headteacher could evaluate how well the deficiencies in the practice of individual teachers were being addressed.

22. During the first critical 12 month period, schools make continued progress, although at varying rates. Headteachers need to analyse a range of data which indicates how well the school is doing, and be able to create their own measures of progress, knowing how to go about setting targets for pupils, and understanding what is needed to sustain improvement and raise attainment further.

The new action plan

23. After the inspection to remove a school from special measures, the school, together with the governors and usually the LEA, produces a new action plan based on the key issues. Generally, the key issues are few in number but, importantly, focus on continuing and extending those aspects already begun, which will help the school raise still higher the quality of its work.

24. Schools find the process of producing a new action plan considerably eased through their experience of having worked on their original action plan. Different models have been applied, although the most successful were those which drew on new found expertise and interest. In one school the draft plan was produced by the headteacher together with senior managers who had been closely involved in the feedback on the original action plan and was then shared with the whole staff and with governors. In another school the plan was drafted by the headteacher and link adviser, and ratified by governors; and in a third, a large primary school wrote a long term action plan to meet the key issues but also developed 'mini' action plans to sharpen the detail and timescales. Schools must guard against becoming complacent. In a minority of schools, headteachers failed to involve the staff in the action planning process, so that staff were left wondering whether their increased skills were really valued. The key feature of the

action plan must be that, whatever its format, it informs and encourages the school's continued progress.

THE GOVERNORS' RESPONSE

Roles, responsibilities and relationships

25. Chairs of governors found that their workload increased significantly while the school was in special measures, but as improvements were made, especially in relation to their understanding of governors' roles and responsibilities, most governing bodies felt they were able to work more effectively. After special measures, committees functioned more efficiently and they monitored the school's performance with a good degree of understanding and expertise. The governing body increasingly felt more able to challenge and question ideas and decisions made by the headteacher and staff, and the school's performance generally.

26. Following removal from special measures, governors' workloads eased in most cases, especially the frequency of meetings. In some schools, individual governors became more actively involved; there was a more equitable distribution of the work; and meetings were even more purposeful. Governors' improved confidence and enhanced professional knowledge need to be utilised to maintain momentum for improvement, for example in the development of the new action plan. They felt they were more active participants the second time around, both in the process of identifying areas for improvement and suggesting how they might be achieved, especially where a change of headteacher had resulted in a more open approach to sharing information and ideas.

27. To aid governors in their understanding of data and appreciation of how progress is made, some schools recruited the services of the LEA. Increasingly, the governors made use of statistical data in monitoring and they welcomed the continuing support of the link adviser from the LEA in the setting of targets to raise standards.

28. Relationships between the governing body, headteacher and staff, which had improved throughout special measures, continued to strengthen, as governors and staff developed a better understanding of the issues. Governors continued to visit schools regularly, develop professional relationships with staff and, overall, take an active role in the life of the school.

29. Schools need to consider how their relationships within the community have been affected. Many governors reported an increased confidence within the school community and that contacts between staff and parents had improved following the school's removal from special measures. In some schools, parents were more confident about asking questions of both governors and staff about the school's performance; in others the parent teacher association had been revitalised. A key to successful relations is to keep parents informed about the continued improvements in the school, for example through regular newsletters.

Self-evaluation

30. Most governors recognised the need for their schools to develop further the capacity for secure, sustained self-evaluation, although some governors were more involved in the self-evaluation process than others. In one school, governors meet the headteacher and staff at an annual conference for the purpose of reviewing the schools' progress and achievements. They consider statistical data, monitoring reports from the headteacher, governors and subject co-ordinators, and the views of parents and pupils. The discussions during the review resulted in judgements which underpinned the identification of priorities for the next detailed phase of the school development plan. However, there are examples of governing bodies where the aftermath of special measures has resulted in governors feeling their skills had already been fully used and that evaluation was now safe in the hands of the senior managers. One chair of governors reflected: *“we have not fully cracked evaluation of the school's performance. This is partly to do with roles and partly to do with skills. Although the curriculum committee receives regular reports from the headteacher and subject co-ordinators, there is little questioning or challenge”*.

31. Governors felt that self-evaluation was a relatively new area for them. In general, governors were more confident with monitoring the progress of actions taken than they were with evaluating the educational impact. Nevertheless, all governing bodies were involved at some level in setting targets for raising standards. Governors appreciated the continuing involvement of the LEA in exercises such as target setting and an annual review, which they felt contributed to the school's self-evaluation process. One chair of governors emphasised the importance of becoming a *“self-critical, self-evaluating school”*, and felt the school was *“now being put to the real test. Parents are beginning to place their trust in us again we must deliver ”*.

External support

32. During the period of special measures the governing bodies of many schools had been highly dependent on LEA personnel for training, guidance and support, and found the reduction in allocated link adviser time after special measures were removed problematic. Governors need to maintain their level of training so as to respond to changing needs. School-based training provided by many LEAs was often judged to be the most effective, mainly for its inclusion of all governors and the development of a team approach to the governing body's responsibilities.

33. Governors expressed disappointment that additional funding, which often had been made available to a school during special measures to help address particular difficulties, such as specialist teaching, additional teachers, or resources, had been reduced or discontinued. In one school, with a high number of pupils on the register of special educational needs, funding was no longer available to release the co-ordinator from full-time class responsibility to work alongside teachers and pupils to raise attainment. It is for the governors and the school to plan how they might minimise the effects of a reduction in the extra funding. In a small school, additional finance had been available during special measures to allow the headteacher to reduce his full-time teaching commitment to extend the range and frequency of monitoring teaching and to work with a teacher who required intensive support. When the additional funding was

subsequently withdrawn, the school bought time from an adviser to monitor teaching regularly.

34. In some schools where the LEA no longer sent a representative to meetings of the governing body, the governors regretted this loss of direct contact. In a few schools, chairs of governors welcomed the LEAs' written reports, but felt that face-to-face discussions were more helpful. Nevertheless, in many schools the combination of the training of governors and increased skills brought about through their involvement with the special measures process, had fitted governors well for maintaining effective support for schools and taking an informed part in decision-making, especially in aspects of finance, staffing, and increasingly about the curriculum. Governors generally understood that the LEA had to make financial choices and that the level of support would be scaled down over time.

35. In a few aided schools, chairs of governors felt that the level of support given by the diocesan authorities during special measures had been maintained afterwards. However, the degree of after-care provided by most dioceses, like that of the LEA, had been reduced. In the main, chairs of governors reported very disappointing responses from their diocesan authorities when discussing potential future support.

The main priorities

36. With special measures behind them, for the majority of schools the governors' main priorities are to sustain improvements in the quality of education provided by the school and to continue to raise standards. For some, improving further their skills in monitoring and evaluation is a key area of future training. For others, general training for the governing body remains a priority. Above all, there was a great determination among governors not to allow their schools to get into difficulties again.

THE LEAS' RESPONSE

The changing role of the link adviser

37. Schools develop a close working partnership with the LEA during the period of special measures, which they are often reluctant to see diminish post special measures. The continuity provided by an adviser or inspector assigned specifically to the school is valued by headteachers, staff and governors alike. Even in those schools where staff and governors felt more could have been done by the LEA to prevent special measures being applied in the first place, relationships had been rebuilt as the school made progress and improvement became self evident.

38. Many schools view the link adviser's role as central to the LEA's support programme and see the adviser as the LEA's 'front line' representative in the school. After special measures, the school often remains very dependent on the LEA for external monitoring and additional support, in terms of advice, expertise and funding. Arrangements vary according to a number of features, including cost and the size of the LEA's advisory team, although schools benefited most when there was a planned reduction over time in the level of support.

39. The combination of evaluation through formal review and monitoring visits by the link adviser provides the LEA with a measure of the school's progress after special measures have been removed. Although LEA advice and support were readily available to schools following the removal of special measures, quite properly there was a reduction in the level of activity. In most LEAs this resulted in a specified number of days of adviser's time throughout the year for aspects such as training, monitoring and management. Headteachers appreciated the continuity that the link adviser provided with the LEA and the sharp focus of the planned visits on key management issues.

Continuing support

40. The support provided by LEAs for schools falls into four main categories: management advice and support for headteachers and governors; practical support and guidance for teachers in classrooms; support and training for curriculum development, including the implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy; and financial support through additional funding. Support in each of the first three categories continued, since it was available to all schools irrespective of their circumstances, but often at a less intensive level than previously. In most of the LEAs, however, additional funding was reduced significantly, or removed altogether.

41. In some schools where financial mismanagement had contributed to the special measures judgement, officers from the LEA had worked closely with governors, the headteacher and the school's finance officer to establish improved financial accounting and planning systems, so that by the time the school was removed from special measures, the overall financial situation was healthier and a phased withdrawal of additional funding had been agreed.

42. In other cases the LEA had removed the school's delegated powers and financial decisions were made by the LEA, including those related to staffing. In most schools in the survey, full delegation was restored immediately following, or soon after, the removal of special measures, often with considerable help from the LEA in setting the budget. However, in one LEA delegation was only partially restored and it proved difficult for the school to make decisions which impinged on aspects of the budget over which they had little control, so that the pace of change slowed because of additional negotiations with the LEA and meetings of the governors' finance sub-committee.

43. The introduction of the requirement for LEAs to have education development plans has meant that LEAs have had to formulate clear policies and practical strategies to support all of their schools, including those in various categories of concern. These categories of concern generally lead to a hierarchy of support, often tailored to meet the specific needs of the schools. The overall programme nearly always includes an 'entitlement' of support for all schools, largely through the assigned adviser or inspector.

44. Schools recently removed from special measures often remain on an LEA's list of schools causing concern, in one category or another, depending on whether there are remaining, designated serious weaknesses. Inclusion on such a list results in continued support for a school after removal of special measures and continued monitoring of standards and progress. In some LEAs it also ensures that schools continue to benefit from some additional money for a period following removal, if appropriate; for example, for specialist support and training where it is still needed. One LEA officer commented, *"post-special measures is rather like a convalescence period, you can't expect the school to get up and walk on its own too soon"*.

Monitoring

45. Following the removal of a school from special measures most LEAs were conscious of the need to balance, *"keeping a watchful eye with allowing the school to enjoy its achievements and develop its independence"*. The range of approaches to monitoring was very varied. However, in most LEAs it resulted in monitoring at arm's length. Link advisers and inspectors visited the school less frequently, but their visits were focused on designated areas, for example, setting and monitoring the meeting of targets or supporting, managing and undertaking an annual desk-top review, as occurred in all schools. In one LEA, all annual reviews take place in the same term, which for some schools removed from special measures could mean a gap of almost a year before they receive any in-depth monitoring. A significant proportion of monitoring was carried out through the collation and analysis of performance data, and priority was given to setting and monitoring targets for raising standards. As a consequence, information about progress and the effectiveness of resources in maintaining and raising standards was illusive, and in some schools, gained too late for remedial action to be taken.

46. A significant weakness was the reduction in the monitoring of the quality of teaching. It is difficult to see how the LEA can maintain a clear and accurate picture of the quality of education provided, particularly in those schools where monitoring and

self-evaluation are not yet wholly effective, without at least some checks in lessons. Better planning by LEAs of the post-special measures period is needed to achieve the right level and timing of support.

47. One of the areas of the special measures monitoring process valued by LEAs was the clarity of judgements conveyed by HMI as a result of evaluating policy and data alongside the practical aspects of teaching. Although schools recently removed from special measures have been judged to be providing an acceptable standard of education, their recovery may not yet be complete. Evidence gathered through first-hand observation in classrooms is often essential to identifying the rate of improvement and confirming the school's strengths and weaknesses.

48. While schools appreciated the continuing link with their adviser, headteachers regretted the effects of reduced activity with comments such as:

- *“as headteacher, I miss the formal monitoring by HMI and the LEA we are still adjusting to standing on our own two feet and continue to need support and guidance”*; and,
- *“the LEA appears to assume that the school can now stand on its own”*.

Schools welcome procedures for their support which are clear and effective. In one LEA, *“an inspection and special support team monitors school improvement, including schools in special measures, with serious weaknesses, or those about which the LEA has a concern, and any school which comes out of special measures is placed automatically on the monitoring list. Progress is reviewed regularly and a variety of support is available, if required.*

Supporting school self-evaluation

49. Many LEAs were confident that the headteachers would be able to sustain the improvements made during the periods of intensive support and that the schools would become confident, self-evaluating institutions. This was particularly true of many of the newly-appointed headteachers who had introduced monitoring and evaluation procedures into their schools early on in their headship. In a few instances, the LEAs had used the review and development models from those schools as exemplars for others.

50. However, in other schools, even at the point of removal from special measures, LEAs saw the need to improve the quality and range of monitoring and evaluation. Often this was most apparent where there had been relatively little change in the managers over the period of special measures and there had been no history of secure monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, some LEAs intended to give priority to training headteachers, staff and governors in self-evaluation, through programmes outlined in their education development plans. A few LEAs have already provided extensive training for schools in monitoring and evaluation, and part of the annual review process is to validate the outcomes of a school's self-evaluation. Some schools have learned from the value of detailed special measures action planning. In one school the

headteacher admitted that: *"in a previous school, producing a school development plan was something they did but did not refer to it very often"*. After the experience of special measures many schools saw their development plan as a very valuable document that would guide and sustain development and improvement.

51. Nevertheless, despite the weaknesses identified by the LEAs themselves in the self-evaluation process, in many of the schools the LEAs had not involved themselves closely with the schools' development planning or with any planned exit strategies from special measures. Successful strategies included developing a timeline of actions and outcomes based on what still needed to be achieved within the school which was then monitored by governors, senior managers and LEA personnel; establishing links with schools recently out of special measures; and agreeing the best use of service level agreements by the school with its LEA to identify continuing needs such as professional development, senior management training, or self-evaluation techniques. Many LEAs had supported headteachers and governors directly with drafting the action plan following removal from special measures, where weaknesses had already been clearly identified and were based on sound external evaluation.

SUMMARY

52. There are a number of commonly recurring features associated with the first 12 months after the removal of special measures. Not all of the features are present in every school, and the combinations do vary. However, headteachers especially may find it helpful to be aware of the range of issues experienced during that initial period of learning to stand on your own feet.

53. **Please do:**

- ◆ accept that there will be differences across a wide range of areas accompanying the removal of special measures, principally in the levels of support and the intensity of monitoring. Headteachers need to manage that transition. It will mean that the school will not have access to regular monitoring by HMI; there is likely to be scaled down monitoring by the LEA; and where additional funding had been provided, for example, to supplement staffing or extra learning measures, it is likely to be reduced;
- ◆ ensure that you know how any reductions in support will affect the school and establish very early on what compensatory measures need to be taken;
- ◆ negotiate with the LEA what essential services are still required and set up a programme of support. Areas for consideration might include monitoring levels of teaching overall or for individuals; availability of professional development; and the development of the new action plan;
- ◆ draw on the strategies and ideas used during special measures to aid the process of gauging what still needs to be done;
- ◆ make a distinction between those issues which require a continuation of actions already begun, and those which are helping to establish a new direction for the school. New initiatives, by comparison, are likely to require more time, extra resources, and careful planning;
- ◆ ensure that the local community, and particularly the wider community, are made aware of the school's success so that any residual negative comment is laid to rest. Invite key people into the school to celebrate its achievements;
- ◆ find time to help the staff enjoy their success;
- ◆ consolidate the proportion of satisfactory or better teaching and then aim for a higher proportion of good or better teaching. Establish what stage individual teachers have reached in their teaching and then identify what steps need to be taken to increase their performance further. Could their teaching be more challenging? Do they show enthusiasm? How efficient is their use of time? What extra responsibilities can each carry?

- ◆ continue to increase teachers' familiarity and confidence with new or detailed schemes of work;
- ◆ continue to refine planning and check on the application of breadth, balance and progression in the curriculum;
- ◆ establish the need for regular checks on the match of work to pupils' different needs;
- ◆ encourage individuals or groups of teachers to undertake appraisal of their performance as a tool for refining improvement rather than a tool to diagnose weakness;
- ◆ involve the governors fully in the development of the new action plan to draw on their confidence and heightened professional knowledge;
- ◆ encourage governors to visit the school and to communicate regularly with staff. Avoid governors feeling that their work is done and that evaluation of progress can be handed back to senior managers;
- ◆ be prepared for teachers wishing to move on.

Please do not:

- ◆ think that the level of work and the time taken up will quickly reduce: feeling under intense pressure should lessen, but the energy and drive to complete initiatives should remain;
- ◆ make many detailed changes immediately; allow time for consolidation and mapping out the next steps. This is important if special measures have been removed in the first half of the school year. It is better to plan and prepare for changes which involve pupils for the next school year;
- ◆ fail to involve staff in the next development stage. The special measures process will have created new skills among staff which need to be used;
- ◆ assume that the removal of special measures will be uniformly welcomed: some teachers are anxious that without regular support and advice they will be unable to maintain their personal improvement and standards will slip. They will need to be given extra support and encouragement;
- ◆ panic if staff go through a period of doldrums after the removal of special measures. Batteries have to be recharged. Try to recognise the signs and be ready to give sympathetic support. Do not over-react but allow staff to share their feelings, emphasise the positive aspects of their work and present the new issues in a challenging way;
- ◆ accept too many invitations to speak at conferences and meetings. There will still be much to do in your own school which requires your full attention.