



3 April 2006

Mrs S Ashe
Executive Headteacher
Metheringham Primary School
Princes Street
Metheringham
Lincolnshire
LN4 3BX

Dear Mrs Ashe,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF METHERINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Glynn Storer, Additional Inspector, to your school on 22 - 23 March, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed ten lessons, registration of pupils, assembly and breaks, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a range of staff, the chair and vice chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The school is currently under the leadership of an executive headteacher from a local school and also receives support from senior leaders from this partner school. At the time of the visit, one teacher was on long term sick leave and two more were absent, ill.

Achievement and standards

Pupils enter the school with broadly average attainment. In 2005, by the end of Year 2, standards were below average in mathematics and reading but broadly average in writing. By the end of Year 6, standards were below average overall. Pupils' progress to the end of Year 6 was inadequate. In particular, pupils who achieved standards which were average or below at Key Stage 1 made the least progress. The school's subsequent review of progress has accurately identified areas for improvement in mathematics, writing, the Foundation Stage, and with some groups of pupils who find learning difficult.

In the lessons observed on this visit, pupils made at least satisfactory progress but this was often from a starting point which was below the level at which they should achieve and below the national expectations. In some cases, pupils' progress was limited by their lack of understanding and skills from earlier learning. Standards remain below the national average overall.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- ensure that pupils of all abilities make at least satisfactory progress throughout the school – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

Pupils speak enthusiastically about the school. They say that their teachers are kind and make learning fun. The fact that they enjoy school is reflected in the attendance rates which are above the national average. Behaviour is good overall and for many pupils it is very good. In lessons, pupils are attentive and many show good attitudes to their work. However, a small number of pupils occasionally need encouragement to concentrate their work. The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils are sensitive to the views and beliefs of others. They know right from wrong and are well prepared for life in a culturally diverse society. Relationships are strong and the school has a happy and calm atmosphere. Pupils know how to keep healthy and safe. They add much to the school community. They have a strong sense of responsibility and demonstrate this through their telling contributions on the school council and their readiness to carry out a range of jobs around the school, such as collecting litter or acting as Playground Friends.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory overall. However, although the school has taken effective steps to eliminate inadequate teaching, the incidence of good or better teaching is not yet high enough to ensure that all pupils achieve

equally well. Most teachers manage their pupils effectively and relationships are strong. Teaching assistants give good support to those with learning difficulties or disabilities.

In the mixed reception and Year 1 classes, children have the opportunity to learn through investigative play and practical activities, as well as through the direct teaching of key skills. Planning for the school's youngest children has improved and is now generally good, although inconsistencies in the ways in which teachers interpret these plans mean some activities do not offer enough challenge and so a few children do not make the progress that they should.

In Years 2 to 6, just over half the teaching was good and the rest satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers have high expectations. They set work that matches pupils' differing abilities. They move the lesson along at a good pace and skills are taught systematically. They provide good opportunities for pupils to collaborate or discuss their ideas with others. Learning in these instances progresses well because pupils are only too ready to rise to the challenges set.

However, until recently there has been no accurate overview of how well pupils are doing as they move through school. As a result, work has not always been pitched at the right level, pupils' progress has been hindered and underachievement has gone unchecked. The headteacher recognises this as a weakness and is tackling the issue rigorously. The school has already improved systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. Current arrangements are very thorough and provide teachers with excellent data. Teachers are now beginning to take account of assessment information in their planning for pupils with different capabilities. Consequently, most pupils are now making satisfactory and, at times, good progress in lessons. However, these measures have not been in place for long enough to enable older pupils to make up the ground that they have lost over time.

Curriculum provision is broad and meets National Curriculum requirements. Since the inspection, there has been improved planning across teams in the Key Stages. This is firmly based on a clear understanding of the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. The planning incorporates targets for pupils at different ages and levels of attainment. Increasingly, teachers build on their teaching of literacy and numeracy in other subjects. There is greater attention to variety in learning approaches and use of a wider range of activities. However, some teaching is limited by the lack of key resources in classrooms, such as standard and interactive whiteboards.

The school makes the care and welfare of all pupils a priority. Suitable child protection procedures are followed by all staff. Standards of care are good. Pupils feel safe and valued. They are confident that their views are listened to and acted upon. The school's procedures for identifying and supporting pupils

with learning difficulties and disabilities work well. Constructive links with outside agencies ensure that these pupils and the school's most vulnerable pupils get the support that they need. The academic guidance and support for pupils have improved considerably since the last inspection because the school has introduced strategies to enable pupils to play a more prominent role in setting and reviewing their own targets.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- improve unsatisfactory teaching – satisfactory progress
- ensure that all teachers clearly understand what pupils need to do to improve and that they communicate this clearly to them – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The school has benefited greatly from the leadership of an experienced executive headteacher and also the support provided by senior staff from the partner school. The headteacher has completed a thorough review of all aspects of the school and drawn up a detailed and effective action plan which addresses the main priorities. Regular and rigorous systems for monitoring progress towards improvement and evaluating the effectiveness of action are in place. The headteacher's evaluation of progress is accurate and has been well communicated to staff, governors and parents.

The headteacher has worked with key staff and local authority advisers to introduce important features to teaching and learning across the school. These include more focused and collaborative planning, targets in mathematics and literacy which are specific to individual pupils, regular use of assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress. The monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work by the headteacher indicates improvement and has been used to further refine the priorities in the school's action plan.

Subject leaders have analysed work in their areas of responsibility and identified weaknesses. These have been used to inform action plans, and teachers have received appropriate training on priority areas. There has been effective joint planning and review with senior staff from the partner school. Subject leaders are beginning to monitor lessons and pupils' work and to identify progress or issues for development. Staff confidence is improved and there is considerable enthusiasm. However, as yet, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that pupils are making sufficient sustained and improved progress overall.

The work of the governing body is improving. The chair and vice chair of governors work closely together and communication to the governing body is improved. Working practices have been reviewed and adjusted. Governors

have received training on monitoring progress and visiting the school. The first formal visits are now taking place. There is an appropriate structure for the monitoring of progress against the school's action plan.

The school has made good progress in leadership and management since the inspection. The headteacher has provided a clear vision and has made expectations explicit to staff. Subject and team leaders are beginning to be effective in their roles. Training and support has been provided effectively from a number of sources. Analysis of pupils' progress is now central to planning. There is good capacity to improve further.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- develop the role and skills of the core subject leaders in order to enable them to improve pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics – satisfactory progress
- establish and implement a rigorous and systematic programme of planning, monitoring and evaluation which focuses on pupils' progress – good progress

External support

The school has received good support from local authority advisers in mathematics and English. Further support is planned in science. There has been effective review of teaching by local authority and partner school staff. The school's core subject and team leaders have been well supported by senior staff from the partner school. This support has enabled school staff to be more effective in planning and to develop their management skills. Team work is now more effective.

The local authority's statement of action to support the school is detailed and provides thorough information about the nature of assistance to be provided, timescales, intended outcomes and costs. The target date for removal from special measures is realistic. However, some aspects of the statement have not been completed in the timescale suggested. The intended appointment of two additional governors is now urgent.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory progress

Quality of the local authority's statement of action – good

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to focus on increasing the rate of pupils' progress so that most achieve at least the standards expected nationally.
- Establish fully the governors' role in visiting the school and monitoring its progress.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of children's services for Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
H M Inspector