



12 October 2006

Mr N Redfern
Acting Headteacher
The Metheringham Primary School
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Dear Mr Redfern

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE METHERINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Glynn Storer, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 July, 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 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed ten lessons, attended assembly and registration, scrutinised documents and met with the acting 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 acting headteacher supported by the executive headteacher who led the school in the spring. The school also receives support from a partner school and local authority advisers. At the time of the visit, two teachers were on long term sick leave. A substantial building programme has made considerable demands on the school's space and organisation, requiring several moves of classrooms.

Achievement and standards

The school has received provisional results from the national tests taken earlier in the summer. These are to be regarded with some caution until they are confirmed. The provisional national test results for pupils in Year 2 indicate an improvement on last year, particularly in writing. Standards are now broadly average in reading and above average in writing and mathematics. Provisional test results for pupils in Year 6 also improved on 2005 and are now broadly average in English and mathematics. Results in science fell slightly from their 2005 level but remain broadly average. The school's own assessment data indicates that this represents at least satisfactory progress for most pupils by the end of Year 2 and broadly satisfactory progress for many pupils by the end of Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities made satisfactory progress overall and some made good progress, as indicated by school data.

The school's system for tracking pupils' progress indicates that many pupils are making progress at least in line with their targets. However, a significant minority are still not reaching the targets set for them and pupils in Key Stage 2 are often not yet working at the expected level for their age. The progress of these pupils is limited by gaps in their understanding and skills from earlier learning.

In the lessons observed on this visit, pupils made satisfactory progress overall. Pupils made good progress in just under half of the lessons. The school has more to do to ensure that pupils make the consistently good progress necessary in order to reach the levels expected of them.

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

The school's promotion of good, and at times outstanding, personal development and well-being continues to be a strong feature of its work. In the more successful lessons, pupils display excellent attitudes and a healthy enjoyment of learning. Most pupils work hard and readily rise to the challenges that they are set, because teachers expect nothing but the best from them. They successfully develop qualities of independence, collaboration and self-confidence in these lessons, which assist them in their learning. Almost all pupils behave well. However, a small minority occasionally display a lack of concentration, restlessness or unsatisfactory behaviour. The school is rightly introducing new arrangements to reward good behaviour and to achieve greater consistency in the management of behaviour. The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. In an

assembly on the theme of 'Don't judge a book by its cover', pupils showed maturity beyond their years when they related this theme to their own experience. Similarly, they showed commendable interest and respect when discussing the beliefs and customs of people from other cultural backgrounds and faiths.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved steadily since the inspection in October 2005. It is now satisfactory with a greater proportion of lessons showing good and, in some cases, outstanding features. No inadequate teaching was observed on this visit and the school has taken successful steps to deal with this weakness since the inspection. This improved teaching is leading to better progress and more pupils now achieve standards which are close to the expectations for their age.

Pupils in the reception and Year 1 classes receive at least satisfactory and often very good teaching, and are able to learn through a range of appropriate play and practical activities. Planning for these classes is now good and provides consistency and progression into Key Stage 1.

In Years 2 to 6, teaching is at least satisfactory overall with increasingly good features. Lessons are planned thoroughly and pupils are familiar with specific targets for their achievement in literacy and mathematics. In the best lessons, learning objectives are explained clearly and referred to at key points in the lesson to assist pupils in knowing exactly what to do. The increased use of interactive white boards has brought greater variety to teaching approaches and more activity for pupils, who can now demonstrate their learning to others.

Teachers model activities effectively with pupils to ensure that they understand how to be successful. Pupils are expected to work productively in groups and individually. As a result, most pupils show interest in their work and try hard. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers do not always make their lesson objectives and expectations of pupils clear enough. The pace of lessons is inconsistent and often slows when pupils move on to tasks. Some pupils find listening difficult, especially when their peers are speaking.

The school has implemented a regular system for recording assessments of pupils' achievement and tracking their progress. This information is used effectively to identify pupils who are underachieving and need additional assistance to improve. The information also informs teachers' planning. The use of different targets for pupils of different abilities focuses learning effectively and pupils are generally able to identify their target and understand what they need to do to achieve it. However, some of these targets do not challenge the most able sufficiently. Teachers' marking mostly follows the school's agreed policy and provides pupils with comments on how

well they have achieved objectives and advice on how to improve further. However, there is still some variation in practice, particularly in the quality of guidance given to pupils.

The curriculum is broad and meets National Curriculum requirements. Literacy is increasingly used as an element in planning for other subjects to consolidate pupils' skills and to provide practice, particularly in writing. The planning conducted jointly by small teams provides greater coherence and continuity and enables teachers to share ideas and resources. It is now important for these teams to monitor the effectiveness of this planning and revise plans accordingly.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils and for ensuring their care and welfare continue to be effective. The school has strengthened the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and these arrangements work particularly well for pupils with learning difficulties and for other lower attaining pupils, because they also underpin programmes of additional support that the school provides to boost their performance. Consequently, many of these pupils achieve well.

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

- improve unsatisfactory teaching – good 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 benefits from the effective leadership of the acting headteacher, well supported by the executive headteacher. These experienced leaders complement each other very well. Together they are working hard to embed rigorous systems to support school management and, in doing so, successfully building the school's capacity for further improvement.

The systematic and rigorous checking of teaching and learning has continued. The school's view is that this process, along with feedback to teachers and appropriate training and support, has been instrumental in improving the overall quality of teaching and learning. Monitoring evidence supports this view. The headteacher, with effective support from the local authority, is addressing strategic planning issues effectively.

The school has begun to develop the roles of other staff with management responsibilities. Team and core subject leaders have contributed satisfactorily to planning and target setting. They have also worked with the headteacher and local authority staff in the initial monitoring of lessons and pupils' work. As yet, however, the school's middle leaders do not have a complete overview of the range of monitoring that needs to be carried out or when and

by whom it will be undertaken. This lack of an agreed programme, which gives leaders the necessary time to monitor, feed back and follow up developments in their areas of responsibility, means that the full impact of their work is yet to be felt.

The governing body has also taken satisfactory steps to improve its overview of the school's work. New governors have been appointed and several governors have visited the school recently to see it at work and receive progress reports from the headteacher and other members of staff. Governors have been allocated to monitor items in the school improvement plan but these new arrangements have yet to take effect. At present governors do not collect enough first-hand information to hold the school to account for what it achieves or to secure the quality of education that the school provides.

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 – satisfactory progress

External support

The school continues to receive good support from local authority advisers. Subject leaders have benefited from joint observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work which have informed subsequent planning. There has also been useful contact with senior staff from the partner school to discuss key aspects of responsibilities. Increasingly, the school is using expertise and experience from its own staff and developing productive team work.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that governors continue to visit the school and review its progress against the action plan and key issues for improvement.

- Ensure that teachers responsible for core subjects and year teams adopt regular and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating provision, enabling them to share findings and effective practice.

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