



6 November 2006

Mr N Redfern
Acting Headteacher
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Metheringham
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Dear Mr Redfern

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF METHERINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Pat Cox, Additional Inspector, and Charlie Henry HMI to your school on 18 and 19 October, 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 October 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and staff, groups of pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit, building work has been completed and the school has moved into the new and refurbished rooms. One new teacher has joined the school and another has undertaken a phased return to work after a period of extended sick leave. The substantive headteacher has resigned and the governors have advertised the post. The experienced acting headteacher continues to have responsibility for running the school.

Achievement and standards

The results of national tests in summer 2006, which have yet to be published formally, indicate standards at the end of Year 2 which are above the national average. These results are improved on the previous year, particularly in writing and mathematics, and represent at least satisfactory progress. By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly in line with the national average overall and pupils' results in mathematics improved on the previous year. However, standards in science fell. Provisional data indicates that pupils made no more than satisfactory progress from the standards they achieved at the end of Year 2. Analysis of the school's assessment data shows that these pupils made slower progress in Years 3 and 4 and then made at least expected progress and often more in Year 6. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities made satisfactory progress overall.

The school assesses pupils' work in English and mathematics regularly and uses this information to track their progress against targets set so that they reach the levels expected nationally. Although many pupils reach or exceed these targets, a significant minority still do not and are working below national standards.

In the lessons observed on this visit, pupils made generally satisfactory progress. Where learning was more active, pupils of all abilities made better progress. However, in those lessons judged satisfactory, a minority of pupils made slow progress, especially boys of middle and lower attainment. As on the last visit, gaps in the knowledge and understanding of these pupils prevented them from making progress at the rate necessary for them to reach their targets and achieve the objectives for the lesson.

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

Most pupils continue to behave well and often very well. They treat others with respect. The new reward system is effective in giving recognition to those pupils who behave well and focusing others on the choices they should make. Relationships between pupils and with adults are good. Pupils largely concentrate well, although their attention wanders when the pace of the lesson is slow. A few pupils, particularly the younger ones, have difficulty in controlling their own behaviour, but teachers have successful methods for ensuring that they learn self-control. Pupils say they enjoy school and that there is always an adult they can confide in when they have concerns. They are positive about others' behaviour and say that any unacceptable behaviour that existed previously has been eliminated.

The school is developing the range of responsibilities which pupils are given. They take these seriously. For example, the school council is particularly effective in giving the pupils a voice in the work of the school and they discuss issues thoughtfully and sensibly. They are developing their economic awareness through their management of a budget and planning of expenditure. Pupils have increased awareness about healthy eating through the work the school is doing to improve their understanding of how to stay healthy. There are effective methods to teach pupils about the changes and dangers they will encounter as they grow up.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve and is now at least satisfactory and in many cases good. No inadequate teaching has been observed on the last two visits and the school has fully achieved this key action point from the inspection in October 2005.

Teachers' planning is thorough and usually reflects the range of abilities in each class. Effective use of the recently installed interactive white boards is improving the involvement and attention of pupils. The best teaching has programmes tailored for different groups of pupils to allow them to learn at a level appropriate to their needs. In these lessons, teachers judge pace accurately, consolidating learning when necessary and moving pupils on promptly whenever possible.

Pupils in the reception and Key Stage 1 classes receive satisfactory teaching overall with some good features. The best lessons are carefully organised, provide a good range of activities and proceed at good pace. Where teaching is satisfactory, activities do not challenge all pupils sufficiently. Very good provision is available for outdoor learning in the Foundation Stage and this facility is used very effectively.

In Years 3 to 6, teaching is satisfactory overall and there are many good features. Teachers plan lessons in detail and mostly cater well for the range of age and ability in classes. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and the new reward system is used effectively to encourage pupils' interest and give praise. The better lessons had activities for different groups of pupils which met their needs and good support from teaching assistants. However, in some lessons, a minority of pupils were engaged in activities which either did not challenge them sufficiently or which went beyond their capability.

Systems for assessing pupils' work across the school are regular and well established. There is a clear marking code which is used well by most teachers although this does vary in quality between the core subjects. The system for collecting and analysing this assessment information is

sophisticated. The analysis undertaken aids in the identification of pupils for intervention in literacy and numeracy but is not yet used sufficiently to inform planning for groups of pupils in their regular lessons. The introduction of specific targets in literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2 has made a good contribution to focusing pupils' learning and evaluating their progress. The targets address different levels of attainment but some children require more specific targets to provide suitable challenge or support.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. There has been good progress in joint planning by teams of teachers in each Key Stage. The emphasis has rightly been on the core subjects to this point but planning for other subjects is underdeveloped. This will require consideration as the school seeks more opportunities to consolidate key skills through other subjects. There were good examples in this visit of literacy and science being taught through work in history.

In the specific work with those pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, relationships are good and pupils readily ask staff for help if they do not understand what they are asked to do. Most pupils work hard. However, learning is less successful when there is insufficient use of practical resources or all pupils are insufficiently involved in activities. Pupils, parents, teachers and teaching assistants, supported by the special educational needs co-coordinator, are involved in setting targets within individual education plans (IEPs).

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 acting headteacher continues to lead the school effectively. He provides stability and continuity, ensuring that the school's plans have been implemented. The progress of developments is monitored regularly and further action planned as a result. The core subject leaders are more closely involved in monitoring their subjects through joint lesson observations, some work scrutiny and analysis of test results. This has provided an understanding of where weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding lie but there is still variation in the use made of this information. In English it is beginning to be effective in identifying some gender differences in attainment and in giving teachers guidance about how shortcomings should be tackled. The school's very useful bank of assessment data is giving the school a good view of progress from year to year in the core subjects and is helping senior

managers to identify where there has been significant underachievement, as well as better progress.

The school has satisfactory plans to develop the role of other senior managers, particularly in the much-needed area of the curriculum. At present, teachers have sound guidance on how to plan in English and mathematics for the range of age and ability in the class. However, this is not yet the case for other subjects, where there is only basic information about the topics to be covered but little about how to build on the pupils' skills from year to year in mixed-age classes. While the curriculum is satisfactory overall in Key Stage 1, a considerable amount of time is given to English in the mornings, without a clear enough understanding of the impact this is to have on pupils' learning. An additional effect is to reduce the time available for other subjects.

Arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of the provision for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are inadequate. Information is gathered about pupils' levels of attainment; however this information is not yet analysed in order to identify areas of best practice or where improvements need to be made. There is insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning arrangements for these pupils. As a result, senior leaders and governors do not have sufficient information to assess how well the school is meeting the needs of pupils who have specific needs.

The governors are now beginning to be involved in the systems for monitoring the progress of the action plan, although this is at a very early stage. Many recently-appointed governors are having a significant impact on the work of the governing body as a whole. However, governors are not involving themselves sufficiently in rigorously evaluating how rapidly the school is making progress. There is still over-reliance on the acting headteacher to provide the information they need rather than collecting the specific information needed to keep themselves informed.

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 local authority continues to provide effective targeted support for the school through the core subject consultants and work with the governing

body. This is particularly the case in their support for the appointment of a new headteacher.

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 teachers use all available assessment information to refine targets for pupils and adjust planning so that it better matches the needs of pupils.
- Develop the role of the senior leadership team in quickening the pace of improvement.
- Ensure that there are rigorous and comprehensive arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs.
- Further develop the capacity of governors to fulfil their role in monitoring rigorously the work of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
H M Inspector