



6 March 2007

Mrs J Needle
Headteacher
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Sproughton
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Dear Mrs Needle

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SPROUGHTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with David Jones HMI to your school on 27 and 28 February 2007, 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 September 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and the pupils' work. They observed nine lessons, and met with the headteacher, key members of staff, the chair and vice chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA)

Context

Since the section 5 inspection one teacher has left and an experienced teacher has been seconded to the school by the LA; she will remain in post until the end of the academic year. Two teachers have tendered their resignations with effect from Easter 2007.

Achievement and standards

Attainment on entry to the school is above average and has been for a number of years. In the Foundation Stage the quality of education remains inconsistent. Pupils are keen to learn, articulate and often have good basic number skills. However, the lack of opportunity to learn through activity and play hinders progress.

Attainment at Key Stage 1 improved in 2006. The number of pupils attaining the expected levels improved on the positions of 2005 and 2004. The three year summary indicates that writing levels, which had been consistently below reading and mathematics levels, improved in 2006. However, a scrutiny of the pupils' work in Year 2 currently reveals that inconsistencies in the development of written English remain. Similarly, pupils have yet to develop their higher level number skills.

The results in the 2006 national tests at Key Stage 2 indicate improvements in standards from the dip of 2005. The number of pupils gaining Level 4 in English, mathematics and science was above national averages. However, the numbers of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was below what might reasonably be expected, given pupils' above average starting points and the high standards achieved at Key Stage 2. Therefore higher ability pupils did not make sufficient progress from Key Stage 1 to 2, particularly in English.

A scrutiny of work in Year 6 confirms that pupils have responded well to effective teaching since January 2007. The standards of written work, number skills and calculation accuracy have improved in response to good formative marking and academic guidance.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils continue to display enthusiasm for their learning. They behave well and respond positively to activities which challenge them and engage their interest. Attendance continues to be good. There have been no exclusions this academic year. The school's current plans to revise the reward system have potential to further engage pupils and promote a success culture across the school.

Quality of provision

Observations of lessons indicate that some progress has been made in improving aspects of teaching, although the overall quality of teaching and learning across the school remains inconsistent. The appointment of an experienced teacher for the Year 5/ 6 class is undoubtedly having a positive

impact on these pupils' progress. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching has improved. A robust system of lesson observation has been developed with support from the LA. Teachers are provided with helpful feedback, including clear guidance on how to improve.

Of the nine lessons observed by HMI: three were good; four were satisfactory; and two were inadequate. This represents improvement since the inspection. The best lessons are well planned, learning objectives are shared with the pupils and effective plenary sessions revisit the major areas of learning. Effective lessons are delivered at a brisk pace and include a variety of activities that match tasks to the pupils' learning needs. In those lessons where teaching remains a concern the nature of the challenge is inappropriate. As a result, the lack of engagement by pupils in their own learning leads to inattention and some inappropriate behaviour. The marking of books often recognises pupils' efforts but, with some notable exceptions, does not usually provide enough helpful advice. Teaching assistants are not always effectively directed but many are effective instructors when working independently.

The use of assessment remains underdeveloped. The school has a wide range of assessment data but this is not yet available in a system that consistently informs teaching and learning. Suitably ambitious targets have been set for older pupils but this is not yet the case across the school. Data is not yet being used consistently by all teachers to inform their planning or pinpoint where interventions are necessary. As a result this is not yet having an impact on improvements in learning in all lessons.

The September 2006 inspection report expressed concerns relating to the inadequate curriculum provided in the Reception class; these remain. The lack of an appropriate outside teaching space is adversely affecting the standard of the pupils' creative and social development. Although the school has the finance available to address this issue, the LA has been slow to support the efforts of the staff and the governing body. Therefore, facilities for learning, particularly in the Foundation Stage remain a concern. This provision cannot be deemed satisfactory until improved facilities are in place.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- Raise standards and achievement by improving the quality of teaching so that work matches pupils' abilities - satisfactory progress.
- Improve the provision for Reception children - inadequate progress.

Care, guidance and support

The good level of care provided for pupils continues to be a strength of the school. Academic guidance is less well developed and the school is aware of the priority to refine their systems to monitor and track pupil progress.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- Put in place robust systems for tracking pupils' progress – although improvements have been made in Years 5 and 6, the overall progress is inadequate.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a secure view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and continues to strive for school improvement. She has high expectations of staff and is optimistic and positive about the improvements made so far. The headteacher has a clear and appropriate focus on the priority of improving the quality of teaching and learning. A robust monitoring system has been introduced that indicates that some progress has been made. The headteacher was invited to join HMI in the observation of teaching and learning for this inspection. Her judgements were accurate and areas for development identified were astute. Monitoring of teachers' planning is being completed rigorously and is providing accurate feedback for staff.

The systematic use of assessment information to inform teaching and learning and thereby raise standards remains a priority. The headteacher has worked hard to secure the improvements required. The temporary appointment of an experienced Key Stage 2 co-ordinator is undoubtedly having a positive effect on teaching and learning in years 5 and 6; however, this appointment is temporary and there is still a need to improve the leadership skills and confidence of other staff with curriculum responsibilities in order to move the school forward.

The governing body is organising its resources into appropriate sub-committees and is well-intentioned; however, the Performance and Improvement Committee has yet to make an impact on the critical issues the school is facing.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- Put in place regular and robust systems for monitoring teaching and learning- satisfactory progress.

External support

The LA has provided good support for the school in several respects. Their statement of action is clearly focused on the issues to be addressed and good curriculum support and advice has been provided to improve teaching and learning, together with support for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes. However, the support for the essential building developments to improve provision has been more limited and this is causing an unacceptable delay to the work schedule.

Main Judgements

The progress since being subject to special measures is inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Governors and the Diocese need to secure the support of the LA to address the weaknesses of curriculum provision in the Foundation Stage.
- The consistent use of assessment to inform teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Children and Young People in Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu
H M Inspector