

8 April 2008

Mrs G Mantom
The Headteacher
Dogsthorpe Infants School
Central Avenue
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
PE1 4LH

Dear Mrs Mantom

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF DOGSTHORPE
INFANTS SCHOOL**

Following my visit with David Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 March 2008, 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 January 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

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

Yours sincerely

Alan Alder
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF DOGSTHORPE INFANTS SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 11 and 12 March 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. They met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, the member of staff responsible for pupils who have learning difficulties and a group of pupils. They also met the chair of governors, two other governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection the assistant headteacher has left and the senior assistant headteacher has become the deputy headteacher. This is a new post in the school.

Achievement and standards

The progress made by pupils was good in 33% of the lessons observed in this visit, satisfactory in 55% and inadequate in 11%. Children's progress in Foundation Stage, where the majority of good lessons were observed, is good. It is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2. The school's assessment data also indicates that pupils are now beginning to make satisfactory progress. However, the progress made by some slower learners is currently slight.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils continue to behave well in classes and around the school. Good relationships are still evident in all age groups. Pupils say they like school because 'their teachers are friendly and they have lots of friends in school.' As a result, they are polite and welcome visitors to the school. Attendance is satisfactory but is not as high as at the time of the last visit. This is because of seasonal absence caused by ill health. Punctuality has improved slightly, because the school has recently introduced a more rigorous system for monitoring lateness.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is similar to that at the time of the last inspection. The lessons observed ranged from good to inadequate. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 has shown little improvement since the last monitoring inspection. However, more lessons are now taught to a secure satisfactory standard and pupils are beginning to make the expected rate of progress. This is because there are additional teaching sessions for many who are not making the progress that they should. Better use is being made of assessment procedures to target pupils' learning needs and to raise teachers' expectations. Nevertheless, the proportion of lessons which are good is still too small.

In some lessons, teachers use questions effectively to challenge pupils and to prompt them in their understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. They set the scene carefully, through the use of well chosen vocabulary, and sustain the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. In these lessons, pupils work at a good pace. In contrast, some lessons lack focus, the pace is too slow and pupils spend too long sitting listening or responding to the teacher. As a result, they become restless and they are not clear about what is expected of them. In some lessons, teachers do not correctly assess the pupils' level of understanding before setting the task.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of teaching assistants continues to improve. The additional support they provide helps to ensure the pupils are making progress. They work closely with the teachers in the planning of lessons and contribute appropriately, by sharing their observations and assessments of the standards and progress of different groups of pupils. As a result, planning is better matched to the needs of the different ability groups and provides a satisfactory framework for lessons. However, there is too much variation in the sharpness of the learning objectives. For example, very few lesson plans clearly identify subject specific vocabulary the pupils should know and use by the end of the lesson.

The school has identified that writing is a particular weakness, and staff know the elements that pupils find particularly difficult. However, in Years 1 and 2, pupils' inaccurate use of phonics persists. Not enough opportunities are taken to improve weaknesses in their spelling and handwriting. The amount of attention being given to developing the pupils' knowledge and use of subject specific vocabulary, especially in mathematics, is not as extensive as previously.

The quality and accuracy of assessing pupils' work in their half termly English assessment books has improved, with clear links being made to national curriculum levels. These assessments include the next steps statements to guide pupils to the next level. Pupils know their targets, but insufficient reference is made to them during the lessons. Consequently, the majority of pupils are not clear about the steps they need to take to achieve them. The quality of marking is improving but is variable between classes and year groups. It tends to be clear and more informative in the English books than in other subjects.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics as a matter of urgency by improving the quality of teaching and learning – inadequate progress
- Improve the quality and accuracy of teachers' assessment and its use in planning the next steps in learning – satisfactory progress
- Use assessment data effectively to check pupils' progress over time and to identify underachievement quickly so that action can be taken to halt further decline – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

There is closer monitoring of pupils' progress and the school's leaders are much better informed about where progress is insufficient. The subject leaders and year leaders have undertaken some good, pertinent evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of provision in their areas. A minority of evaluations, for example of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, is not specific enough. The reasons for individual pupils' underachievement are now discussed regularly by senior leaders, along with strategies for reversing it. These include modifying teaching, as well as organising additional support. For example, some pupils are given extra teaching for basic skills or attend an after school reading club. The school's leaders have monitored provision to check that it is being influenced by this assessment information. It is too soon for improvements in pupils' learning resulting from these changes to be reflected in the schools regular checking of progress. The information from evaluations is beginning to influence lesson planning by teachers and teaching assistants. Lesson observations are carried out regularly, though not particularly frequently. Where monitoring has revealed aspects of teaching which need to be strengthened, some robust measures have been taken. However the follow-up to observations is not systematic enough to bring about rapid and sustained improvement. Although teachers' joint planning of some aspects of their lessons has had some benefit, it is not agreed practice that the strengths of one teacher will be used to help the other. For example, where questioning is a strength of one teacher, it is not used to help another to plan questions for their lessons when this would be beneficial. The school still lacks the capacity to secure the improvements necessary to the teaching of Years 1 and 2.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- Improve the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation to identify strengths and weaknesses in the school's performance and prioritise the steps which need to be taken to secure improvement - satisfactory progress

External support

The support from the local authority has been satisfactory. It has included support and training for subject leaders to assess the quality of provision, training for some aspects of teaching, and advice on the development of a good assessment policy.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the quality of teaching improves, so all is at least satisfactory and there is more which is of a good or better quality.