

Cambridge Education
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01223 578500
Direct F 01223 578501
risp.inspections@camb-ed.com



01 June 2009

Mrs Sue Brown
Aslacton Primary School
Church Road
Aslacton
Norfolk
NR15 2JH

Dear Mrs Brown

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Aslacton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 of May 2009, 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 November 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – 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 Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Aslacton Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 May 2009

Evidence

HMI observed mathematics and literacy lessons, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the consultant headteacher, staff, pupils, the chair of governors, a group of parents and three representatives from the local authority.

Context

Currently there are 69 pupils on roll and 3 classes. A consultant headteacher funded by the local authority took up post in February 2009. The Year 3/ 4 class is being taught as a job share with an experienced teacher moving from Reception and Year 1 to teach the class 2 days a week. The job share is working well and providing stability for these year groups. Reception and Key Stage 1 are now one class taught by the Assistant Headteacher.

Achievement and standards

According to the school's data, the majority of children started school in Reception in September at, or above age related expectations. They have made good progress and are already beginning to achieve the early learning goals in all areas of learning. Pupils in Year 1 continue to make good progress from their starting points.

Since the last inspection, national data on the attainment of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2008 has become available. It shows a fall in the above average level 3 results from the previous year in all subjects and a fall in higher level 2 results in writing. Overall results remain significantly above average. Inspection evidence indicates that teacher assessment, particularly of writing has become more robust in the last year and that previous assessments may have been over generous.

In Key Stage 2 national data, not available at the time of the inspection in November, shows that standards have declined steadily from 2004 in all subjects. Mathematics and English dipped to below average in 2008 whilst science improved slightly and is now in line with national expectations. Progress for last year's Year 6 pupils between the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics was inadequate. However, the school's current data on attainment and progress shows an improving picture especially for Year 3 pupils. This is because there is now stability in teaching staff in Years 3 and 4 which was not the case at the time of the last inspection and the quality of teaching has improved across Key Stage 2. However with regard to pupils' progress, because of previously inadequate teaching there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and therefore a legacy of underachievement. The school is working very hard to put this right and assessment data from January indicates that progress has accelerated and is now



improving. The school's data for the current Year 6 indicates that most pupils are on track to attain standards that are at least in line with national expectations and that standards have improved in mathematics and writing. However pupils' writing remains an area for further improvement. Pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities are well supported and are currently making satisfactory progress.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Raise standards in pupils' writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 - satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

There have been some improvements in pupils' personal development since the last inspection because pupils are now better prepared for their future education. They have very positive attitudes to work and because of their new learning targets say they feel more involved in understanding how to learn better particularly in mathematics. Behaviour is good both in lessons and on the playground. They feel safe in school and say there is no bullying. If there are incidents of unkindness these are dealt with quickly and effectively by the school. Parents confirm this and say they are pleased with how staff listen to any concerns they may have and deal with these immediately. Attendance is good because pupils enjoy coming to school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory with good features to outstanding. All observations were carried out jointly with the consultant headteacher and in every case judgements were agreed. The school's monitoring data, since the appointment of the consultant headteacher, indicates that teaching has improved. Inspection evidence shows that teachers have taken on board improvements highlighted by the consultant headteacher. For example, in every lesson observed there was a good level of challenge for more able pupils indicating that teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement have been raised. One Key Stage 2 pupil said, 'The teachers seem to push you on to do better.' When teaching was most effective, there was a good match between the task set and the ability of the pupils, learning objectives were clear and carefully broken down into small steps so pupils understood exactly what they were expected to learn and teachers asked probing questions to check and further develop pupils' learning. Teaching was weaker when there were too many learning objectives in a lesson; teachers did not give pupils the opportunity to think things through for themselves and the planning did not offer sufficient opportunities for pupils to be independent learners.

Teacher assessment is now more secure and this was confirmed during a detailed review of pupils' work with teaching staff. The school has further work to do on ensuring judgements about pupils' writing are fully in line with the latest national guidance. All pupils are set curricular targets that are appropriate for their age and ability. These are displayed on the classroom wall and pupils know that they can

move to a new target once they have achieved the one they have. They know and understand their mathematics targets but were not so sure about their literacy targets. They feel that these 'have too many words' and it is not easy to understand what is expected or how you will know when you have achieved the target. Older pupils knew they could ask the teacher, but most felt all targets should be easy to understand without this. Pupils are very pleased with the 'steps to success' because they know exactly what they need to do to achieve their best in lessons. However there is not yet consistent practice in how these 'steps to success' are used by all staff. There are also inconsistencies in teachers' marking in pupils' books. The school has recognised this and plans are in hand to ensure that there is a consistent approach through the school and that this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement and standards.

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection because the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are being fully implemented and teachers are beginning to make effective links between subjects. This is evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and is developing in Key Stage 2. For example teachers are using technology effectively to support their teaching. In one mathematics lesson where pupils found the teacher's photographs exciting and were able to understand the concept of tessellation more easily because of this.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Raise teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement at Key Stage 2 - satisfactory
- Fully involve pupils in understanding their own learning and development - satisfactory

Leadership and management

The good leadership of the consultant headteacher, ably assisted by the substantive assistant headteacher, has ensured that all the key issues identified at the previous inspection are being addressed and that overall progress is satisfactory. A new leadership team has been established and they are beginning to work effectively together to ensure the work of the school is carefully monitored and that improvements continue. Staff are working very well with the local authority advisory teachers for literacy and numeracy and have rapidly taken on board ideas and methodology that has improved their teaching and pupils' learning. Subject leaders for literacy and numeracy know about the standards in their subjects because they are using the school's new and robust tracking system effectively. They quickly identify pupils who are underachieving and ensure appropriate intervention programmes are put in place. However, there has not yet been time to fully evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions. Governors have become much more involved in evaluating the progress the school is making. The chair of governors is working tirelessly with the local authority to ensure that a substantive headteacher is in post as soon as possible. The consultant headteacher has made a commitment to stay at the school until this issue is resolved so currently the school's capacity to make further improvements is satisfactory.



Progress since the last inspection:

- Create a leadership team capable of developing, monitoring and evaluating the work of the school in order to raise and sustain the achievement and standards of all pupils - satisfactory

External support

The local authority acted promptly to support the school when it went into special measures. Their statement of action sets out clearly the additional resources and the nature of support that the school should expect to receive. Already consultants and the school improvement partner have provided well targeted assistance, particularly in providing advice to teachers regarding raising their expectations of pupils' capabilities, in setting up appropriate learning targets and improving their lesson planning. The raising attainment plan has been drawn up with help from local authority consultants. Actions are well staged and focused upon the steps that need to be taken to drive improvement and address the key issues from the inspection. Neither the local authority plan of action nor the raising attainment plan has a separate timeline of actions to be implemented and this will be addressed when the new plan is written later this term. A project board has been convened with senior representation from the local authority. The board is working closely with governors to ensure that the school has a substantive headteacher as soon as possible. They are carefully monitoring the progress the school is making with the key issues and evaluating the support being given by the consultants. The target date for removal from special measures is a year. However, because of the current lack of a substantive headteacher, it is too early to judge whether this is a realistic target.

Priorities for further improvement

- Maintain the rigorous focus on raising standards and further accelerating pupils' progress in Key stage 2
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching so that it is all good or better
- Work with pupils so that they know and understand their literacy targets and how to achieve these
- Refine the current marking and feedback system so that it consistently incorporates encouraging comments to build pupils' confidence, evaluative comments so they know how well they have achieved and next steps comments so they know how to improve further
- Further develop the leadership skills of subject leaders so that they are involved in the monitoring and evaluation of their subjects
- Urgently resolve the issue of the substantive headteacher

