



6 June 2005

Mrs E Stead
Headteacher
Measham Church of England Primary School
Bosworth Road
Measham
Swadlincote
Derbyshire
DE12 7LG

Dear Mrs Stead

Implementation of Measham Church of England Primary School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Ms C Kirby HMI and Mr M Cragg HMI to your school on 23 and 24 May 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school has made limited progress since the last monitoring inspection and limited progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for Leicestershire and the Diocese of Leicester. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF MEASHAM CE PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 20 lessons or parts of lessons, two registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the literacy co-ordinator, an advanced skills teacher, the chair of governors and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the vice chair of the governing body and a representative from the LEA.

At both key stages in 2004 the results in national tests fell significantly when compared with 2003 and were too low overall. Targets set for 2005 are very challenging as a result of assessment procedures which were insufficiently robust to give an accurate view of the pupils' progress. The headteacher has modified these targets based on recent data which, the school reports, is more reliable.

In lessons, some higher-attaining pupils reached the standard expected for their ages, but many other pupils produced work that was below the expected standard. In some cases, this was attributable to weaknesses in their literacy skills and an inability to sustain concentration in tasks which required independent learning. Where the teaching was good the pupils generally progressed well. However, the proportion of teaching that is good or better is not high enough to ensure the rate of progress is sufficient to have an impact on standards.

The quality of teaching has improved but remains unsatisfactory overall. Teaching was good in six lessons, satisfactory in seven, unsatisfactory in six and poor in one lesson. The better teaching was seen in the Foundation Stage and some of the Year 5 and Year 6 classes. In these lessons objectives were sharply focused and clearly explained. Teachers engaged pupils with enthusiastic presentation and questions were well used to assess what the pupils had learned. The lessons had good pace and the level of challenge was appropriate to the pupils' attainment. Pupils were expected to work productively in pairs and groups, sharing their learning. There were good examples of guided group work led by the teacher and teaching assistants.

In the unsatisfactory lessons planning did not match the wide range of abilities in the class and was not based on assessment information. Teachers talked for too long; this limited the time available for pupils to play an active part in their learning. Pace and challenge were insufficient to engage and sustain the attention

of pupils, so that some higher attaining pupils finished work early without anything to do. Activities were mundane and did not address the key learning objectives. Pupils lacked diligence and many did not produce sufficient work in the time available. Pupils' learning was unsatisfactory as a result.

The open-plan style of the building continues to have an adverse effect on learning. A constant low level of noise from other classrooms and corridors impaired the quality of discussion in most lessons because pupils at the back of the room could not clearly hear the speaker.

Assessment procedures are used inconsistently. In the better lessons teachers used effective strategies for checking learning. In other lessons, such strategies relied too much on pupils' indicating whether they understood or not rather than demonstrating that they did. In the best examples, marking in books referred to learning objectives and identified targets for improvement. However, procedures are not yet used consistently by all teachers.

Arrangements for managing the curriculum are satisfactory. Allocation of time for the non-core subjects has been reviewed and subjects are taught in half term units to ensure topics are covered in appropriate depth. Regular skills lessons in information and communication technology (ICT) have been timetabled for most Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes. The co-ordination of core subjects is at an early stage of development.

The headteacher provides positive leadership and direction to the school. Her assertive stance in tackling poor behaviour has had a measurable impact in lessons and around the school. She has challenged underperformance of teachers robustly and has not hesitated to adopt formal measures where appropriate; however, by tempering her actions with appropriate guidance and support, the impact on the culture and ethos of the school has been positive. Strategies to bring about improvement have been established although these have yet to have a substantial impact on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

A team approach is emerging at senior management level. The deputy headteacher and the advanced skills teacher are enthusiastic senior leaders, committed to the headteacher's clear strategic vision for the school. They have the capacity to drive further improvement. Systems are in place for monitoring the quality of lesson planning although formal written feedback to individual staff does not identify specific areas for development.

The long-term absence of both the mathematics and science co-ordinators has been well managed by senior staff and subject consultants provided by the LEA. However, the prolonged absence of these key managers has slowed the overall

progress in implementing strategies to improve standards in mathematics and science.

Governance of the school remains unsatisfactory. However, the recent appointment of a new chair of governors has considerably improved the capacity of the governing body. The new chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school. Under her leadership the sub-committees have begun to meet and a common format of agendas and minutes has been agreed. Plans to link specific governors with key areas of the schools work are well advanced. Training for the governing body has been provided by the LEA.

The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning were good in seven lessons, satisfactory in nine and unsatisfactory in four. This is an improvement since the last visit. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were better where teaching was good in the Foundation Stage and some Year 5 and Year 6 classes. In other lessons, pupils were too often passive learners who were compliant rather than enthusiastically engaged in their work. Pupils' concentration and attention were variable with too many drifting into chatter which slowed their learning. Too much time was spent in some lessons managing behaviour.

The new behaviour policy is being used by most teachers. In some lessons it helped to establish classroom routines and was effective in reminding pupils of expectations and returning them to work. However, there were other occasions where the policy was not implemented, allowing particular pupils to avoid sanction for unacceptable behaviour.

Behaviour out of lessons was satisfactory. Where pupils are closely supervised, movement is well controlled and does not interfere with lessons. In assembly, as in some lessons, concentration lapsed for a small minority of pupils who engaged in low level chatter. The new play equipment in use at lunchtimes provides appropriate activities and keeps pupils engaged. Supervision was satisfactory.

Attendance to the end of April 2005 was 93 per cent, a slight reduction since the autumn term but above the level at a similar stage in 2003-4. The school has targeted intervention by the Education Welfare Officer for those pupils with attendance below 90 per cent. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored, leading to parental contact where necessary.

Since the last monitoring visit six pupils have been excluded for a total of 32 sessions. This is an increase on the earlier part of the year and reflects specific strategies to indicate to parents and pupils where behaviour is unacceptable. These exclusions have been followed up by action designed to help pupils manage

their behaviour and training for teaching assistants. The strategy has led to improvements in the behaviour of some pupils.

In consultation with the headteacher the LEA has provided a range of consultants and advanced skills teachers to support key areas of the school's improvement work. The recent LEA review shows a reasonably accurate view of progress in implementing the action plan. However, although they have now nominated a governor, the LEA has been too slow in providing appropriate support to the relatively inexperienced governing body.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school

The proportion of teaching that is satisfactory or better has risen since the last monitoring visit, but at 70 per cent is still too low. The school has identified the characteristics of good teaching, although these are not always present in lessons. The long term absence of three members of staff and a substantial reliance on temporary teachers has had an adverse effect on attempts to introduce consistency in classroom practice. Many lessons do not adequately meet the needs of pupils in mixed ability, mixed age classes. Although there are systems for monitoring the quality of lesson planning, written feedback does not focus sufficiently on areas for development and improvement. With the exception of the foundation stage, assessment for learning is underdeveloped.

Progress is limited.

Key Issue 2: to improve the attitudes and behaviour of pupils throughout the school

Overall, behaviour has improved since the last visit. The new behaviour policy has been agreed with staff and most teachers use it consistently. Teaching assistants and senior staff have received training in restraint and behaviour management. This training was used effectively with pupils presenting difficult behaviour in some lessons. Referrals for unacceptable behaviour are monitored by the headteacher. Behaviour is improving in lessons although the pupils' attitudes to learning are not improving significantly; too many are passive learners or have a very short span of concentration.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 3: to establish an effective management team

The school improvement team has been further strengthened by the award of advanced skills teacher status to a foundation stage teacher. A team approach is emerging at senior level and some staff are rising well to the challenge of increased responsibility. Strategies to bring about improvement are now supported by the new teaching and learning and behaviour management policies which have begun to have an impact across the school.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 4: to improve the organisation and management of the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils

The timetable has been reviewed to ensure coverage of the non-core subjects. There is less movement between classes during the school day but, as a result, teachers have to plan for wide ranges of ability in their mixed age classes. Some training has been provided and teachers' planning is now presented in a consistent format. Planning is monitored but not yet in sufficient detail. Despite evidence in lesson plans of different tasks for different pupil abilities, higher attaining pupils were not consistently challenged except in the best lessons.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 5: to raise standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT by the end of Year 6

Action plans have been produced for core subjects; a range of ICT equipment to support learning has been purchased and installed in classrooms; the literacy co-ordinator has received considerable support to develop her role. However, much of this work is in the early stages and has yet to have an impact on standards. Assessment procedures are insufficiently robust to give an accurate view of progress at Key Stages 1 and 2. The long term absence of both the mathematics and science co-ordinators has slowed the progress of work intended to raise standards in these subjects.

Progress is limited.