



15 February 2006

Mrs L M Chappell
Headteacher
The Gedney Hill CE Primary School
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Gedney Hill
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Lincolnshire
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Dear Mrs Chappell

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GEDNEY HILL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Lynne Blakelock, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 February, 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 November 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, subject co-ordinators, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in November 2005 one additional teaching assistant has been appointed to provide individual support and supervision for a pupil. The school has admitted a number of new pupils taking some classes to thirty one. There are now higher proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and on the register of special educational needs.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' work is assessed regularly in the core subjects. Non core subject assessment was completed as planned in December. This assessment data shows good progress overall in mathematics, satisfactory progress in reading and variable progress in writing where the school has identified specific pupils in most years who require detailed additional support to improve their standards. The school's use of assessment data is good and thorough analysis informs teachers' planning. Additional support provided for identified pupils during the autumn term, particularly in mathematics, has led to clear progress.

In lessons, standards are broadly in line with the national average although there is a very large range of attainment in all classes. Progress in lessons was satisfactory overall with some pupils making good progress. Pupils talk with more confidence and increasingly make more sustained contributions to discussion. Pupils' reading in assembly was confident and fluent. The writing observed in lessons varied significantly in quality with the best being accurate and using the required style, while other examples were still limited by pupils' inability to construct sentences and by low levels of basic skills. Pupils showed improved number skills which supported their learning well in the one numeracy lesson seen.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- improve pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 4, particularly in English, mathematics and science and in information and communication technology (ICT), art, physical and religious education, and geography across the school – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are generally enthusiastic in their learning. They settle down quickly in lessons and focus on their work. They know what is expected of them and this encourages them to feel secure. The positive attitudes they display are helped by effective classroom management strategies used consistently across the school. Consequently they follow instructions promptly. They are calm and sensible and show respect to each other and to the staff. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Teachers have high expectations and pupils respond to this. There have been no exclusions since the last visit. Pupils' attendance continues to be satisfactory and punctuality is good.

This is an inclusive school where all pupils are valued. The school provides opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility and leadership which have resulted in them feeling more valued and involved in the school. They have responded maturely to being a buddy to younger pupils and the school council representatives are involved in decisions which improve the quality of life in school. The effective programme for personal, social, citizenship and health education is assisting pupils to develop skills for life and giving them a greater awareness of the choices and decisions to be made. However, its greatest effectiveness is in the focus it gives to promoting the importance of learning and helping pupils to help themselves.

The children's choice activities, offered on Wednesday afternoons, provide very structured and well planned units of learning. They enable pupils to gain a variety of new skills in a range of diverse and challenging activities. The mixed age groups facilitate relationships outside of teaching groups so that pupils' social skills become more sophisticated. This is evident in pupils' growing confidence to take part in class discussions.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- improve the provision for pupils' personal development and raise the standard of behaviour – good progress.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was satisfactory overall with good features in most lessons. There were no unsatisfactory lessons and one third of lessons were good, a higher proportion than on either of the earlier visits. This closely matches the school's target set out in its action plan. Inspectors' judgements match the school's own evaluation of teaching and identify similar areas for development.

In lessons, teachers' planning was good with different activities matched to pupils' abilities. Learning objectives were clear and explained thoroughly to pupils. In the best lessons teachers used success criteria effectively to focus lessons and help pupils to know when they had achieved the learning objectives. Teachers also assessed pupils' progress well during the lesson before moving on to the next stage of learning. Teaching assistants were deployed effectively to work with individuals and groups. Teachers provided good individual support for pupils, and in the best lessons, offered a range of learning styles. Teachers used behaviour management approaches consistently and effectively.

However, in some lessons, activities and learning styles were too limited and did not allow the wide range of abilities to make similar amounts of progress. Expectations of the quantity and quality of work to be produced were not always sufficiently explicit. Although pupils now speak with greater confidence in class, there were too few extended opportunities for pupils to use formal language in their responses to aid their sentence composition and writing skills. Plenary sessions did not consistently assess pupils' progress to aid in planning the next lesson.

Marking of pupils' work is generally good and gives clear targets for improvement. In the best practice, targets are written in books and a note is made when a target has been achieved.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Literacy and numeracy are now planned for and taught in all areas of the curriculum. This is an improvement since the last visit. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has also improved with more regular access for pupils. The use of ICT in other subject areas is variable and in some is not sufficient. Issues still remain with the unreliability of equipment and the lack of adequate maintenance provided to the school. The personal, social and citizenship education programme is planned well so that it offers wider learning opportunities. The innovative children's choice activities, held on a weekly basis, are very successful as an extension to the curriculum and have a positive impact on pupils' desire to learn. Involvement of pupils in a range of lunch and after school activities is satisfactory.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004

- improve the use of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to support learning in other subjects – satisfactory progress
- improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Years 1 to 4 - satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides good leadership, assisted by the more stable staffing situation of the last two visits. Her analysis of progress using assessment data is good. The evaluation of progress against the key issues is also good and informs the next stage of planning effectively. School level planning is clear and well directed to the identified priorities. There is good communication with parents and provisional admissions for the next academic year are encouraging. Since the last visit, delegation of subject

responsibilities has progressed. External training and support has been used effectively to assist new subject leaders with identification of priorities, creation of action plans and analysis of pupils' work. Assessment in the non core subjects was completed at the end of the autumn term and the outcomes used to inform planning. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are now emphasised in medium term plans for other subjects. The quality of teaching has been monitored effectively through lesson observations and relevant advice provided on how to improve teaching further. Teaching overall is now more consistent with increasingly good features.

Governors make visits to the school regularly and the chair of governors reviews progress against the action plan with the headteacher each week. Strenuous efforts have been made to ensure that the provision of ICT equipment is more reliable and supports good teaching and learning. Governance is satisfactory overall and continues to improve. There has been good improvement overall since the last monitoring visit. A significant factor in this improvement is the stable situation in staffing which has improved pupils' confidence and allowed for developments to be consolidated.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- improve the leadership, management and governance of the school – good progress
- meet statutory requirements, implement the cycle of performance management; ensure attendance registers are marked properly and attendance rates included in the information for parents; ensure that all the required subjects of the curriculum are taught and in enough depth – not inspected on this visit.

External support

The local authority and school improvement service continue to provide a good range of training and support. This has been particularly effective in building the confidence and expertise of teachers taking on the responsibility of subject leaders. The practical activities, joint review of action plans and analysis of pupils' work have provided a sound foundation for future development. There has been good support for the headteacher in planning and the evaluation of progress. There has also been good guidance for governors on the importance of their role in evaluating the school's progress.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Priorities for further improvement

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to engage in structured speaking and listening activities which require the use of formal language.
- Ensure that subject planning for ICT is completed and included fully in medium term plans.
- Ensure that teachers continue to receive good support to build on the recent improvements in teaching and learning and to raise standards further.

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

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
H M Inspector