

**Cambridge Education  
Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS**

T 01223 578500  
F 01223 578501  
Inspections\_2@camb-ed.com

**Ofsted helpline**  
0845 640 4045

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Mr K Tomlin  
Headteacher  
Halifax Primary School  
Prince of Wales Drive  
Ipswich  
Suffolk  
IP2 8PY

Dear Mr Tomlin

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HALIFAX PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Jill Bavin and Ruth Frith, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 28 and 29 March 2006, 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 October 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, nominated teachers, children from the school council, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### **Context**

The school organisation remains the same as at the time of the last inspection. The temporary arrangements put in place to cover the secondment of the special needs coordinator are about to change. An experienced senior teacher from another school has been appointed to strengthen the leadership team with particular emphasis on monitoring children's behaviour.

## Achievement and standards

The latest PANDA report for 2005 confirms that standards were significantly below expected levels in Year 2. While the proportion of children achieving Level 2 in reading and mathematics was close to the national average, it was well below the expected level in writing. Fewer children managed to achieve Level 2b or higher in any aspect. Girls' results were much better than boys'. Results at the end of Key Stage 2 were also well below national levels, at Levels 4 and 5. Results in reading were improved and close to the national average. The progress children make from Year 2 to Year 6 is consistently and significantly below expected levels, although some children who have additional needs make satisfactory progress. Too many children who achieve Level 2 in Key Stage 1 fail to reach Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2. Few children achieve the higher levels 3 and 5 at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 respectively. The school failed to meet its targets in 2005.

Children enter school with standards which are below average. The school's own assessments indicate that children leave the Foundation Stage with skills which are broadly average, although there are doubts about the accuracy of the judgements. During the inspection, the progress seen in lessons in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was generally satisfactory. However, in all year groups, the majority of children were working at or below expected levels with a significant minority working well below. Progress in lessons in other subjects was often inadequate where children's learning was not challenging enough or behaviour was unsatisfactory. Although improvements have been made to teachers' planning for English and mathematics, work is not always matched well enough for all children to make good progress. Poor behaviour is still affecting children's progress particularly in Key Stage 2.

A more systematic approach is now in place for tracking children's achievement in writing and mathematics. Subject leaders are in a position to identify any individuals or groups of children who are not making the progress expected. A similar approach has not been adopted for reading and this is required to ensure children who may fall behind are identified. An initial analysis of the data has enabled the school to introduce specific programmes to support targeted children particularly in Year 6. These are designed to boost attainment and help the many children who need to catch up. Much of the intervention work has only just begun and it is too early to judge its impact. Targets are set for children's attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The school's tracking data indicates that children in Year 2 are on track to meet these at Level 2 and Level 2b+ but not at Level 3. In contrast children in Year 6 are currently well below the levels expected to meet their targets.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- To use assessment data to regularly monitor progress – satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

The management of children's behaviour is still too inconsistent and poor behaviour continues to affect children's learning, especially in Key Stage 2. In the last six weeks, the school has introduced a new behaviour policy which most members of staff are trying to implement. Staff, LA advisers and pupils agree that this has resulted in the recent reduction of inappropriate behaviour from many pupils. Nevertheless, in spite of staff training and agreed procedures, the policy is not consistently applied and lessons continue to be interrupted by inappropriate behaviour. The school has yet to secure a calm and positive environment for learning. Most children want to learn and work hard but their learning is too often interrupted by a minority of disruptive children. Children concentrate better when teachers are teaching the whole class. They find it more difficult to sustain their interest and concentration when asked to work independently. Some children, especially those in Key Stage 1, have responded positively to being rewarded for good behaviour and achievements. Although most children move around the school sensibly, a significant minority do not. Adults' expectations of children's behaviour on these occasions are too low and boisterous behaviour goes unchecked.

Lunchtime arrangements for children eating packed lunches do not aid their personal and social development. Many children eat their lunch sitting on the floor and midday supervisors are not supported by teaching staff to ensure noise levels and behaviour are appropriate. Since the last inspection, the percentage of unauthorised absence has decreased significantly. This is the result of improved procedures for following up absences by contacting parents as soon as children are away.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- Secure consistency in the management of pupil behaviour – inadequate progress.

## **Quality of provision**

Insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection and the quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate. Although better planning for English and mathematics has ensured greater consistency, the teaching was good in only a minority of lessons. In these, teachers had a clear understanding of what they wanted children to learn and shared this with them. Through effective assessment, they knew what pupils could do and set work which built systematically on previous learning. Activities were challenging and engaged the children's interests. Sometimes, pupils were also involved in assessing how well they had done and whether they had achieved the objective set for the lesson.

In lessons that were not quite as successful but were satisfactory overall, teachers were more effective at the start and end of lessons when teaching the class as a whole group. In these lessons, the matching of activities to children's capabilities was less effective and children experienced difficulty in working independently. In some instances, teaching assistants worked effectively with individuals and small

groups and this enhanced learning. Generally, however, the expertise of these members of staff is not used well enough. In lessons that were inadequate, teachers' expectations were not high enough. Activities were not well matched to children's learning and insufficient challenge was provided, particularly for the more capable children. The pace was too relaxed, so some children took the opportunity to misbehave. Sometimes, tasks were mundane and children quickly lost interest. These lessons were taught in subjects other than English and mathematics. In some lessons, the restless and poor behaviour of a small minority affects their learning and the learning of others.

The marking of children's work is inconsistent and generally inadequate. In many classes, the comments in books do not relate to the learning objectives or give sufficient guidance to children on what to do next. Issues identified in marking are not systematically followed up. A start has been made in the way teachers set targets in reading and writing but here, too, practice is inconsistent. Children are frequently confused about their targets and the next steps in their learning so are not clear about how they can improve. Many of the developments to improve teaching, learning and assessment have been introduced recently. Consequently insufficient time has passed for the effect of these to be seen in children's progress and the standards they achieve.

Despite recent changes to the curriculum, it remains inadequate and frequently fails to excite and engage children. Changes to the use of time throughout the school day have resulted in better provision for English and mathematics and to a lesser extent science. New timetables have been developed that reduce the number of short lessons which, in the past, did not always have a clear focus for learning. The ending of setting in English and mathematics has reduced the number of times children move between classes and this has contributed to a calmer working atmosphere for some. However, improvements to the overall balance of the curriculum have been limited as planning is less effective in subjects other than English and mathematics. The school does not have a whole school curriculum plan and this makes it difficult to monitor coverage of subjects. Cross curricular links are not well developed, consequently there are few opportunities taken to reinforce key skills across subjects. There are also weaknesses in the Foundation Stage curriculum in which children have insufficient opportunities to learn outside. Weaknesses in the layout of the accommodation and high noise levels continue to impact negatively on both teaching and learning.

Systems for providing individual guidance for children with learning difficulties and disabilities have improved since the start of the year. Individual education plans and pastoral support plans are now in place. These clearly identify children's specific needs and provide helpful and relevant short-term targets to support improvement in both learning and behaviour.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- To improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that all lessons are well planned and sufficiently challenging to raise standards – inadequate progress.
- To use time more effectively and improve the balance of the curriculum – inadequate progress.

## **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management of the school were judged to be inadequate when the school was placed in special measures. They remain so. Much of the management of monitoring and evaluation is undertaken in isolation and it lacks coordination and consistency. The latest LA evaluation report published following a review of the progress made since the inspection concludes that several actions are required by the headteacher to improve the pace at which the school brings about improvement. The school has updated its improvement plan but it lacks the sharp targets and milestones with which to judge whether the actions taken will be successful.

There has been some improvement in the role played by subject leaders in monitoring the work of the school. Time has been allocated to the deputy headteacher and key subject leaders to undertake planned monitoring and evaluation activities. Training and support from the LA link inspector, subject consultants and advisers have helped to guide this work. The programme of monitoring completed by the mathematics subject leader is the most advanced. She has set up a progress tracking system and completed lesson observations and work and planning scrutinies. This has given the subject leader a better understanding of the weaknesses in provision. Work in other subjects is not as far forward and the subject leader for English is due to change at the end of the year, interrupting progress. Many scheduled monitoring activities for other subjects have yet to be completed. Although the monitoring of provision is becoming more systematic, it is still inconsistent and has yet to have a significant impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Governance is improving slowly. The LA has appointed two additional experienced governors to guide improvements in governance. There are still, however, several vacancies for parent and LA governors. The governing body is becoming more aware of its role. Governors have attended training organised by the LA and completed a health check to evaluate their effectiveness; this identified a number of priorities for improvement. A start has been made on drawing up protocols and plans for governors to visit the school and the committee structure and timetable for meetings has been reorganised. These are useful developments, but the governing body is still not in a position to provide suitable challenge and support for the school's leadership and management and to hold the school to account for its standards and achievement.

Leadership and management are not demonstrating the capacity to improve the school. Weaknesses and inconsistencies remain in teaching and learning, in children's behaviour and in the management and organisation of the curriculum.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- To improve the quality of leadership and management through the use of rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures – inadequate progress.

### **External support**

Although the LA has produced a satisfactory statement of action, it has not succeeded in ensuring that the school makes the progress required. The statement of action is detailed and gives a clear indication of the actions to be taken to bring about improvement. However, progress on a number of actions appears to be behind schedule, and one reason for this is that the targets in the plan are not specific enough or time-limited; consequently slippage has occurred and progress has been too slow. Shorter term targets and milestone are required to ensure the plan is on course. A core action group has been set up to monitor and evaluate the progress made since the inspection. The LA has appointed two additional governors to strengthen the governing body. The school has received support from LA advisory staff particularly for the management of behaviour and the guidance for subject leaders. Support is also received from a LA nominated partner school. A review was completed by LA inspectors in February and a detailed report was written on progress since the inspection. Some of the conclusions drawn were over-generous. The authority considers that its support plan will enable the school to "no longer require special measures" by the autumn term 2007. Although cautious, this reflects the considerable improvements required in the next two years. A rapid acceleration in progress is now needed.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Quality of LEA's statement of action – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that leadership secures the necessary consistency to improve learning and behaviour.
- Foundation Stage accommodation and provision for learning outdoors.
- Care, guidance and support of children at lunchtime and for Foundation Stage children leaving school at the end of the day.

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

Yours sincerely

Rob McKeown  
**H M Inspector**