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Dear Mr Mann

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MARAZION SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 31 October and 1 November 2006, 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 September 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

A range of lessons and other activities were observed in each of the three classrooms. Informal conversations were held with pupils and the school council. Discussions were held with the staff, the executive headteacher, the consultant headteacher, the chair of governors, a new governor, and a representative from the local authority. Key documents were examined, including reports of monitoring activities, a recent local authority report, the new draft action plan and an analysis of the 2006 national tests and assessments for Key Stage 1 and 2.

Context

At the time of the last monitoring inspection the local authority was considering federation between Marazion and St Hilary's, a neighbouring primary school, to secure school leadership. With the agreement of both governing bodies this has now taken place under the executive headship of St Hilary's headteacher. Both schools retain their separate governing bodies and delegated budgets. This is the first federation in Cornwall. During this inspection a visit was made to St Hilary's to provide Her Majesty's Inspector with contextual background. The seconded, consultant headteacher who has very successfully steered Marazion through the last year will remain temporarily to complete the transition phase. The assistant headteacher post has been confirmed and a new, experienced teacher was appointed to the Foundation and Key Stage 1 class in September. A part time teacher is due to leave at the end of this autumn term. Staffing is not yet entirely stable but this is not a barrier to continuing improvement. There has been a low intake into the Reception year this September but already an increase in pupils joining other year groups. There is potential locally to make a significant increase in pupil numbers.

Achievement and standards

There has been much improvement in the progress which pupils are making, although standards remain too far below expectations. School data shows that during the last academic year, while the school has been in special measures, the pupils in Year 6 made nearly twice the amount of progress that is normally expected. Nevertheless, the outcome of the 2006 national tests in Year 6 was lower than expected because the pupils had too much ground to make up. Significant weaknesses persist in writing throughout the school, but a clear plan is being implemented to remedy this, starting with more effective strategies for teaching reading and writing in the Foundation/Key Stage 1 class. Benefits are already being seen in improved reading and spelling skills and the federation arrangements enable staff in both schools to share expertise in analysing pupils' performance.

With the use of much better data, which has been built up and regularly reviewed over the last year, the staff at Marazion are better able to identify pupils' needs. This resulted in progress in all year groups which was better than might normally be expected. The school is now setting realistic targets for these pupils and also for overall school performance.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are showing much more responsibility for their own behaviour and respond well to teachers' instructions about things which they may and may not do. There has been variability amongst the staff in their approach to correcting pupils' behaviour but this is now more consistent. During playtimes pupils play well together in pairs and small groups. In lessons they also work

well together and show appropriate respect for each other's points of view during discussions. Since the last monitoring inspection a 'wake and shake' session has been introduced for all pupils, which is having a positive effect on their readiness for work. They understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and take a sensible amount of exercise. During lessons and playtimes pupils clearly show enjoyment and freely said that they enjoy coming to school and working hard. Since being subject to special measures pupils' attitudes towards work and giving of their best have steadily improved. Provision for aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school council is leading a project on improving the playground environment and is seeking the views of the school community. Attendance for the full year to the end of 2005 to 2006 was below the national average overall, but attendance for the first half term of this year is above the national average.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved and a higher proportion of lessons are now judged to be good rather than satisfactory. The weaknesses which were previously apparent in providing work which was not always well matched to pupils' learning needs have been significantly improved. During this inspection good teaching was seen which motivated and engaged the pupils in exciting learning opportunities. The regular monitoring of teaching and learning that has been carried out shows that the improvements are becoming firmly embedded in classroom practice. This is a credit to the hard work of the staff. There is a good use of partnership work which allows pupils to share their ideas in discussion and explore their reasoning, thereby securing better understanding. Marking in pupils' books is usually providing clear guidance and the use of 'marking ladders' and 'target boards' is helping pupils to understand how to improve their work. The pupils themselves say they now know how well they are doing and are working harder as a result. Interactive whiteboards are confidently used by teachers to improve pupils' concentration and present information. Teaching assistants continue to give valuable support and make a significant contribution to the improved rates of pupils' progress. Provision for the care, welfare and guidance of pupils is good and given a high priority by all school staff.

Federation is having an impact on curriculum planning not least because subject leadership is being shared more widely and more staff are available to contribute to the process. Previous improvements in the quality of the learning environment have been maintained, especially in the Foundation/Key Stage 1 classroom, but there is room for further improvement in one of the other classrooms which is lacking in imaginative engagement of the pupils.

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

- match work more closely to the pupils' needs based on rigorous analysis of test results and data about the pupils' progress – good

- raise expectations through a more aspirational and stimulating curriculum – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The federation of Marazion with St Hilary's has resolved the issue of securing long term strategic leadership for the school. Although the school is only in the first term of this arrangement, it is clear that Marazion will benefit from association with St Hilary's and that staff and pupils will also benefit from the increased opportunities which will accrue. The seconded, consultant headteacher has very successfully managed and led Marazion through a difficult year and assured the ability of staff to take the school forward as it continues to improve. The governing body is monitoring closely the federation and is to be complimented for its foresight in agreeing to the first federation in Cornwall as a step towards securing the long term future of Marazion Primary School. Under the executive leadership of the headteacher of St Hilary's, which is a very successful primary school, clear plans are now in place which will build on the work of the consultant headteacher and the commitment of the school's staff and governing body.

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

- urgently improve strategic leadership and management – excellent progress, now resolved.

External support

The school has continued to receive support from the local authority but is now more capable of determining its own needs. Attached advisers are making regular monitoring visits. Following the federation there is now cooperation between the staffs of the two schools. The support for the school from these various sources is having a positive impact.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Embed the federation arrangements for regular collaboration between the staff of the two schools to ensure that standards of attainment at Marazion are raised as quickly as possible.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Cornwall.

Yours sincerely

Peter Way
H M Inspector