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Mrs L Wakeford
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Dear Mrs Wakeford

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ANGEL ROAD FIRST SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 4 December 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2006.

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

The focus of this visit was principally on the school's strategy for improvement. During the visit, I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you as the acting headteacher and with a senior teacher, the subject leader for English, the chair of governors and a senior education adviser from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in July there have been substantial changes of personnel. Following the resignation and departure of the headteacher in October, leadership is being provided by a temporary acting-headteacher. The

school's seven class teachers include two new experienced and permanent senior teachers. Two other experienced teachers provide temporary cover for a newly qualified teacher who was placed elsewhere to complete her probationary period and another teacher affected by long-term illness.

Achievement and standards

The pupils in the Reception class continue to make good progress. They attain broadly average standards at the end of the Foundation Stage. The progress of those in Key Stage 1 has been inadequate and the pupils' attainment at the end of the key stage has been below average. The staff are working increasingly effectively to raise pupils' attainment by promoting more consistent progress. Significant new arrangements include a reorganisation of the school so that almost all of the pupils are taught in single age classes. In addition, assessment arrangements have been strengthened so that teachers' expectations in all classes are more sharply focused on the next steps in pupils' learning. Since the arrival of the acting headteacher, close attention has been paid to creating a stimulating and orderly environment for learning including well planned classrooms and a more welcoming and useful library.

Judgement

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- raise standards in English and mathematics and particularly in writing – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are improving. Fresh arrangements for managing pupils' behaviour enable more of them to take responsibility for their actions. Most of the pupils make good use of their time in school. Pupils' movement and behaviour are mainly good. Where the teaching is good, the pupils show considerable and sustained interest. The attitudes and behaviour of some of the pupils deteriorate at times when teaching is less secure.

Quality of provision

The school's curriculum has improved considerably. Reconsideration of the school day and of the time to be spent on each subject has led to an efficient daily timetable. A good blend of brief and more prolonged activities is well-matched to the requirements of national schemes of work and to the needs of young pupils. Substantial time is devoted to literacy and numeracy and sufficient time is allocated to allow coherent programmes for the foundation subjects including music, physical education and personal, social and health education.

Audits are being used to identify where further improvements can be made, for example, in provision for information and communication technology.

The school has strengthened its teaching by acquiring new and skilful teachers but it has yet to build consistently good teaching. At times and in some classes, the teaching is highly effective, capturing pupils' interest and leading to good learning. Recent changes in the school have enabled teachers and teaching assistants to focus more closely on pupils' learning needs. The teachers' daily planning identifies learning objectives clearly and includes suitably varied activities for different groups of pupils in their classes. Teaching and learning were particularly effective where the staff required most from the pupils, for example through skilful questioning that made pupils listen, think and engage in constructive talk. The quality of teaching remains inconsistent with some that loses pupils' interest before enough has been achieved. The use of time in lessons and the roles given to teaching assistants were not always planned in sufficient detail.

Judgement

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- ensure that teaching is consistently good or better – satisfactory progress
- review the planning, organisation and delivery of the curriculum to ensure better breadth and balance – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have changed considerably since the inspection visit in July 2006. Two experienced and effective teachers have been successfully inducted into the school. The strengthened governing body has built on its increased awareness of the school's condition by pressing for more rapid improvement. Following the resignation of the headteacher, new overall leadership has stimulated the staff by improving communication, focusing meetings and bringing fresh ideas into professional discussion. The new senior teachers complement the acting headteacher within a well informed and energetic senior management team. Subject leaders have been given a clearer role together with support from senior staff and a pattern of time to dedicate to their areas of responsibility. Better communication and constructive relationships are being developed with the neighbouring middle school.

Close attention has been paid by the acting headteacher to perceptive and accurate evaluation of a wide range of the school's work. This has identified further areas that merit attention, including in special educational needs, health and safety, financial management and acquiring further resources for learning.

Refurbishment and decoration have been used well to create attractive, calm and useful spaces including a well organised suite for the Foundation Stage. Budgets have been established to enable an overhaul of library books and the purchase of more resources for teaching literacy.

As a result of the changes in recent weeks a clear, robust and sustainable strategy for improvement has emerged. Senior staff are promoting better curriculum planning and improving assessment so that teaching and learning can become more effective. The staff are working hard to those ends and with good morale. Teaching staff absent from the school are about to be reinducted. Change is accelerating. Furthermore, the acting headteacher is building the capacity of the new senior staff and of subject leaders so that they can in due course maintain momentum and provide continuity when new overall leadership is arranged.

The senior management team have inherited an improvement plan for the current year. Parts of it have been implemented. The most recent and effective changes have been driven, however, by fresh insights and a sharp awareness of the urgency of the school's needs. Leadership and management of the school are effective but are highly dependent on the local authority and lack the extra security of a suitably recorded longer term plan. The current school improvement plan does not reflect the full range of work that is required to continue improvement, to prepare for reorganisation planned by the local authority for September 2007 and to ensure that the school can operate independently of the current high level of local authority support.

Judgement

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- ensure that the leadership team provides good strategic direction in order to improve the quality of education for all pupils and tackles the underachievement of pupils of average ability - good progress

External support

The local authority has in mind a variety of possibilities for the school's future. Meanwhile, it continues to provide considerable and effective support for the school and its improvement. Two local authority teachers are teaching classes. Considerable practical and advisory support has been given to teachers and subject leaders. Senior local authority officers have supported the governing body in setting clear expectations. Most recently, interim leadership, advice on financial management and further practical help have enabled a swift transfer of leadership and fresh improvement initiatives.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- keep a sharp focus on pupils' day-to-day learning to ensure teaching that is of good quality
- consolidate recent evaluation and analysis of the school's needs into a fresh and comprehensive improvement plan.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Learning Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Deemed signed in absence of signature

Michael Madden
Additional Inspector