

27 November 2006

Mr S Hales
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Dear Mr Hales

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BURNHAM MARKET PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Heather Weston, HMI and Ann Taylor, Additional Inspector to your school on 8 and 9 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.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, children, staff, parents, governors and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

The school organisation has changed. A new headteacher has been in post since September 2006. The LA has withdrawn the support of the school improvement teacher, and the supplementary teacher who was working in class two has also left. A new chair of governors was elected by the governing body on 16 September 2006. Over the coming year, the school will be supported by local authority consultants and an advanced skills teacher. It is also included in the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP). Extended school provision is now available for children for two hours after school.

Achievement and standards

Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection and improving. More children are now making better progress. The school's most recent assessments indicate that by the time children leave the Foundation Stage they have skills which are mostly at or above expected levels. Children make good progress in the reception class and reach higher standards than is typical for Norfolk schools.

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 improved in 2006. Most children made satisfactory progress and reached the expected level for their age, although a small number did not. There continues to be a difference in the performance of boys and girls, although it is not as pronounced as it was. Improvements in children's writing continue to be a priority. The standards achieved by children in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science remains above average. Results in the 2006 tests improved on the previous year, although the school missed the target for the higher Level 5 in writing. The school's own analysis of progress made by children from Year 2 to Years 3, 4 and 5 in 2006 indicates that many children made less than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school recognises that standards and achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) require improvement. The school judges standards in ICT to be at expected levels in Years 5 and 6 but below where they should be in Years 1 to 4. Since the last inspection provision in ICT has improved. Resources have been updated and the headteacher has started to teach weekly lessons to groups of children to help them improve their computer skills.

The school continues to strengthen the way in which it tracks children's progress and identifies underachievement. The recently adopted tracking records indicate where children are in relation to their expected attainment and which ones require additional support to help them catch up. This information and the analysis of assessment data has prompted the school to concentrate on helping girls to achieve more in mathematics and all children in writing. Regular writing assessments have been introduced to keep a check on the progress children are making. These show that progress is still variable across the classes. The mathematics subject leader has introduced a 'groovy maths' programme to help increase girls' confidence and aptitude in mathematics. The school plans to introduce additional intervention programmes in English and mathematics following the appointment of two teaching assistants.

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

- Improve standards, particularly in respect of boys' attainment in Key Stage 1 – good progress.

Personal development and well-being

This continues to be good. Children behave well and they generally enjoy their learning. No misbehaviour was seen during the visit and children are polite and friendly. An undercurrent of restlessness is evident in some classes where children find it difficult to give the teacher their undivided attention. Children have responded positively to the change of headteacher. They especially enjoy the chance to work with him in the new computer suite. New school council members have been elected and they continue to discuss proposals for improving the school environment. They are currently working on exciting plans for developing the playground.

Attendance has improved well since the last monitoring visit. This is the result of a number of positive actions which have strengthened the school's approach to managing attendance. Clear expectations have been communicated to children and parents. The school website logo, 'Every day and every lesson counts' emphasises the importance of regular attendance. Gaps in attendance are followed up more rigorously and an innovative reward scheme is running for the second half of the term. Attendance in September and October was above the target set by the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching continues to improve, although the quality still varies across the school. Teaching for the youngest and oldest children is better, being consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Satisfactory lessons now include more good features than before, but there are still weaknesses. Strategies, such as talking partners, where used selectively, work well, and children's use of hand held whiteboards helps to focus their responses and teachers' assessments. The stronger features in teaching are more often seen in literacy and numeracy lessons but there are still occasions when more able children are challenged insufficiently.

Marking is improving; it is better in English than in mathematics. Younger children tick their work according to how successful they feel they have been. This is a good strategy to involve them in thinking about how they might

improve. The best marking in English books helps to guide improvements but this is not used as effectively in mathematics. Curricular targets for improving punctuation and problem solving are displayed on classroom walls so that children know what they are aiming for. Targets are rarely referred to in lessons. Children are not yet making the link between their target and achieving it in the work they are doing.

A start has been made on evaluating the impact of curriculum planning in order to make modifications. The quality of these evaluations is variable and they have yet to be shared amongst staff. Some teachers are beginning to link learning across curriculum subjects for example, linking creative, mathematical and cultural learning in the reception class, and ICT and design and technology work in class three. Recently installed interactive whiteboards are now in two of the four classrooms. Use of these, to support teaching and learning, is still at a very early stage as teachers become more experienced with the range of applications they offer.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher has made a very good start in the school. There is stronger emphasis on key staff taking more responsibility for the school's work, and a greater expectation for teamwork. Children, parents, governors and staff have all commented favourably on the headteacher's positive style of leadership. Good working relationships have been established with all of the school community. Parents have appreciated the regular newsletters and curriculum information they have received. They were also pleased to be invited to the weekly celebration assemblies, although some would like more regular consultation meetings with teachers to talk about the progress their children are making.

Since the last visit the staff and governors have approved a well constructed school improvement plan which includes the issues from the inspection and subsequent monitoring visits. This provides a good basis for focussing improvement work but could have sharper success criteria for some priorities, include evaluative comments on the impact of the actions for all priorities, and milestones by which to meet the priorities set. Another positive feature is the setting up of a school website which is improving home-school communication and helping teachers to include more ICT in their teaching programmes. A new school brochure has also been drafted.

Subject leader action still requires improvement. Good principles are in place but these are not yet reflected in practice. Expectations for the work of subject leaders have been clarified further in performance management interviews. Time is allocated for monitoring and a subject leader profile defines which activities may be included. Clearer direction is now needed for

how subject leaders use their time and how they report back to staff and governors. The quality assurance of subject leader work should also be part of this process.

The work of the part-time special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has been aligned more tightly to working with children with learning difficulties. While the support is appropriate, the role of the SENCO does not include management of the entire programme of intervention and support. She has suitable knowledge of the work of some teaching assistants but not all. Most of her work focuses on improving children's literacy.

The headteacher has monitored teaching and learning to gain a perspective on the overall quality. Few lesson observations have been completed by subject leaders since the last visit. The records of these indicate that staff would benefit from some training in the effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Regular opportunities for sharing teaching strengths are not yet established. There is not enough direction given to teachers on how they might make good use of observing others.

Governors elected a new chair at the start of the year. A strategic committee which consists of the headteacher, chair, vice chair and chairs of committee has been established to coordinate the work of the governing body. Governors have given the new headteacher good support in the transition from acting headship to ensure he has settled in well. They recognise that they now need to put into practice the monitoring programme they have proposed and raise their profile for challenging the school to improve further. They appreciate the support given to them by the LA.

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

- Improve leadership and management so that the staff are supported and involved more effectively in the development of the school – good progress.
- Establish effective monitoring procedures throughout the school so that good practice can be shared and appropriate help given where needed – satisfactory progress.

External support

The LA continues to provide good support for the school. The project board meets regularly to discuss and evaluate progress since the inspection. Regular support is also provided by English and mathematics consultants as part of the ISP. Improvements suggested in teaching and target setting are being put into action by staff. Good links have also been established with an advanced skills teacher in another school. This has produced useful

exchanges of ideas on improving teaching in the Foundation Stage and for the transition of children into Year 1. Support is also ongoing for the development of subject leadership.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities identified during the last monitoring visit remain the same:

- Continue to develop the leadership and management roles of key staff.
- Continue to strengthen the quality of teaching in all classes to enable all children to make good progress in all subjects.
- Continue to raise attendance levels.
- Continue to make more effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Deemed signed in absence of signature

Rob McKeown
H M Inspector