

21/11/2006

Mr Hutchinson  
Farnsfield St Michael's Church of England Primary (Voluntary Aided) School,  
Branston Avenue,  
Farnsfield,  
Nottinghamshire  
NG22 8JZ

Dear Mr Hutchinson

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF FARNSFIELD ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Sheelagh Barnes and Keith Edwards (Additional Inspectors) to your school on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> and Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 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 May 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior managers, groups of pupils, parents, governors and a representative from the Local Authority (LA).

### Context

The school is starting its second year in a new building following considerable upheaval caused by the amalgamation of two smaller primary schools in the village.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards remain inadequate. National test results at the end of Year 6 in 2006, showed a further decline in the pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science. The school did not meet its agreed targets for the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level. Current

standards of work in Year 6 do not suggest that there will be any significant improvement in standards in the current academic year. This is because the teaching lacks rigour and consistency in some Key Stage 2 classes.

Although the pupils read well and have a good range of vocabulary, the standard and quality of their writing is weak. Much of their work is carelessly presented and is marred by inaccuracies in spelling and punctuation. This weakness is compounded by the teachers' failure to provide adequate feedback. In mathematics, standards are below average because too little attention is paid to matching the work set to the range of abilities within each group. This weakness is most evident in the achievement of the brighter pupils who are frequently set work that is much too easy for them. In science, the work covered lacks depth and although the school has placed a greater emphasis on investigative work, the benefits are not yet evident.

The children achieve well in the Foundation Stage. Here, the staff have an accurate view of the children's attainment when they begin their education and ensure that the work is well matched to their developing needs. The staff are very careful to note the steps needed for individual children to make progress and they ensure through their planning that these needs are met. Furthermore, lessons are fun and the children are able to develop good attitudes to learning.

In Key Stage 1, achievement and standards are satisfactory. This is an improving situation, particularly in terms of the pupils' writing. The children are excited about the new teaching approach that helps them to understand which aspects of writing they need to focus on.

The teachers are more aware of the children's abilities and this information is being used to raise expectations of their achievement. But this use of assessment data remains patchy. Those pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and this enables them to make satisfactory progress. However, the more able pupils are seldom challenged in lessons and this leads to underachievement. Although there are encouraging signs that standards and achievement are beginning to improve, the benefits of initiatives have not yet borne fruit and overall progress has been unsatisfactory since the last inspection.

Target-setting is weak and is not informed by secure benchmarks of where pupils start from, nor is there a reliable predictor of future performance to measure targets against.

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

- Raise achievement, in line with pupils' capabilities, by improving the performance of higher attaining pupils and the systematic use of assessment information to inform teaching and learning – inadequate progress.

## Personal development and well-being

The personal development of pupils remains satisfactory and there are some very strong features. These include excellent behaviour, positive pupil attitudes and effective cooperative working in groups. Spiritual and cultural development is at least satisfactory with strong moral and social development in evidence in the interactions between pupils and adults in classrooms and around the school. The social cohesion, given the recent amalgamation, is commendable. Where teaching is good there is an obvious enjoyment of learning. Attendance is better than in the average primary school.

## Quality of provision

While there have been improvements to the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection, as yet these are inadequate to guarantee that pupils meet their academic potential. However, throughout the school teachers work hard and have good relationships with pupils. Behaviour is good as a result and the school has a pleasant and friendly ethos. Teachers support pupils' social and emotional development well.

Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is good, as noted by the previous report. Teachers make accurate and regular assessments of children's ability and progress. This information is used effectively when planning lessons to meet the needs of boys and girls from all groups well. As a result, children learn to enjoy school and enter into activities wholeheartedly.

In Key Stage 1, teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and some is good. Lessons are planned appropriately to meet the needs of pupils of differing levels of attainment, including those with learning difficulties. Targets are set for the class as to what they could, should and must attain. Pupils know these targets and can talk confidently about them. Marking is regular and annotated well, so that it is possible for senior managers to easily monitor pupils' progress.

At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is too variable, ranging from unsatisfactory to good. Issues raised by the previous inspection, such as differentiation and the quality of marking, have not been sufficiently resolved in all classes. There are some instances of good practice, such as marking and target setting in one Year 3/4 class, but this is not consistent across the key stage. Differentiation is satisfactory in English, and pupils are regularly given the opportunity to improve their writing. However the good challenges and support provided for pupils with learning difficulties are not universal. Marking does not always point out how higher attaining pupils can improve

still further. Writing in other subjects, such as science is not marked with the same rigour and targets as work in English books. As a result, writing in these books is often not as good as it could be. Pupils are set for mathematics, but within sets, pupils of widely differing abilities are often given tasks which do not take these differences sufficiently into account. This slows the pace at which they learn in otherwise satisfactory lessons.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The organisation of the curriculum for some classes in Key Stage 2 does lead to a slackening of pace in the school day and some lost learning time. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good.

The care and support for children is good at the pastoral level and leads to strong personal development and confident, well rounded pupils. The academic guidance of pupils, though improving, is not consistent across or within key stages.

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

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching so that pupils are appropriately challenged in lessons and make satisfactory progress – inadequate progress.

#### Leadership and management

The strategic leadership of the headteacher remains weak and there is little sense of urgency or dynamism in dealing with the key issues. The school's action plan, although adequate, lacks prioritised short term objectives that can act as milestones to the longer term targets. As a result, governors and senior leaders are not able to hold accountable those with responsibility for taking forward key developments. At present the school has only limited capacity for improvement.

Monitoring is at an early stage of development although there is planning to develop expertise through further joint observation. More importantly, the impact of actions taken is not evaluated in terms of how practice in the school has improved, with appropriate supporting evidence.

The senior leadership and management team (SLMT) works collaboratively and now has a stronger sense of its role. Members have a growing awareness of what needs to be accomplished but many initiatives are not managed effectively with a resulting loss of combined impact. This is particularly true of the disparate approach to the oversight of assessment and data.

Classroom teachers have now belatedly engaged with national strategy developments and working together in teams and with an LA consultant to improve the classroom experience of pupils. They are again often working on too many fronts due to lack of strategic guidance and prioritisation by senior leaders. Leadership and management in the Foundation Stage are good.

Governors are supportive but have only a limited view of the school's performance and shortcomings in provision. They are kept informed, but do not hold the school sufficiently to account, again due to the lack of short-term priorities and evaluation evidence.

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

- Strengthen leadership and management throughout the school so that there is clear direction and high expectations, based on rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress – inadequate progress.

#### External support

The Local Authority (LA) has planned an extensive programme of support for the school managers, teachers and governing body. This is at an early stage of delivery and it is too early to measure its impact on the key issues. The commissioned Leadership audit is a sharp, insightful document and is worthy of consideration by governors in particular. The LA statement of action is good. Given the slow start made so far the LA should implement the planned challenge and, if needed, intervention required in order to accelerate progress.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures is inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed only in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

#### Priorities for further improvement

- The headteacher and governors require a more accurate and informed view of school performance.
- Extend the action plan to include prioritised short term objectives that are then effectively communicated to all staff and governors.
- Use the identified objectives to hold accountable those with responsibility for leading and delivering key issues.
- Use performance and assessment information to inform lesson planning and identify those pupils at risk of underachievement.

- Make marking more rigorous and informative for older children in particular to help them to improve their work and to raise standards at Key Stage 2.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, Sean Harford HMI, the chair of governors and the Director of Childrens' Services for Nottinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

*Deemed signed in absence of signature*

David Martin  
H M Inspector