

16 April 2007

The Headteacher  
Farnsfield St Michael's Church of England Primary (Voluntary Aided) School,  
Branston Avenue,  
Farnsfield,  
Nottinghamshire  
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Dear Mr Mansfield

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

### Introduction

Following my visit with Ann Taylor (Additional Inspector) to your school on Tuesday 27 and Wednesday 28 March 2007, 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 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 children, governors and a representative from the Local Authority.

### Context

The previous headteacher left at the end of the Autumn Term. A headteacher has been seconded until July 2007 from a successful school in the local authority. The Governors have advertised for a permanent headteacher but, due to a low number of applicants, have had to re-advertise for a headteacher probably to take up post in January 2008. This may mean that a further interim Headship arrangement is required for the Autumn Term 2007.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. Year 2 achievement in 2006 was satisfactory. There was a small decline in reading and writing results, whilst mathematics improved. National test results at the end of Year 6 in 2006 showed a further decline in the children' performance against national averages. However, the prior attainment of this year group was significantly worse than in 2005. The progress made by these children was poor, but not exceptionally so as it was in 2005. Progress in English was satisfactory but was poor in mathematics and science. The school did not meet its agreed targets.

Current standards of work and assessment information suggest that there will be a significant improvement in achievement in the 2007 Year 2 and Year 6 tests. This is due to improved teaching and learning and the effective use of assessment to intervene where children are in danger of underachieving. Work is more consistent in quality and quantity and the presentation of written work has improved greatly. Teachers now mark work carefully; they give good feedback to students on their progress. Lessons are planned to give due consideration to matching work to children' differing abilities. Children with learning difficulties are well supported and more able children often have work designed for their needs, meaning that progress in learning is faster for all.

Assessment information is now used well, especially the 'visual mapping' that allows teachers to identify those individuals or groups at risk of falling behind or not doing as well as they should. There are plans to develop this system further, partly through the careful matching of tracking to expected progress and partly through the use of a computer based system. Much has been achieved in the last term to raise expectations of pupil performance. Children have responded well and enjoy the challenge of attaining more demanding targets.

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

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

## Personal development and well-being

The personal development of children is good. Most children behave well and are increasingly positive about their work. They take much greater care with the presentation of their work as a result of higher expectations and describe

the best lessons as 'fun and exciting'. Children work well together in groups. Social, Moral, Spiritual and cultural development are good. This can be seen in the positive relationships in classrooms and around the school. They are aware of the need to stay safe and help each other and are made aware of personal and social issues through the curriculum. They feel that effective action is taken to keep them safe, particularly from bullying. They take responsibility, as is seen by their active participation in organising and presenting assemblies. Through the school council they have a positive voice, although meetings could be more frequent. They take healthy eating and being active seriously. Those eating school dinners make good choices from the nutritious menu. Parents and carers could help the school by checking that packed lunches are equally healthy. Children enjoy a range of sporting activities in lessons and many attend additional clubs. Attendance is above the national average.

### Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory overall with an increasing number of good features. All lessons seen during the visit were good or satisfactory. This is because various strategies for training and development over the last few months have successfully generated improvement. As a result of better teaching, children are on line to achieve their academic potential. Visits to see good practice in other schools, clear guidance on the characteristics of a good lesson and how this can be achieved, combined in an atmosphere of support and encouragement has paid dividends. Monitoring of lesson quality has improved. Staff are clear about what they do well and what they need to do to take teaching to the next level. They have been very willing to take advice and have responded positively.

Teachers continue to support children's social and emotional development well and relationships are friendly and encouraging. Teachers are working effectively in teams across the age range and the quality of teaching is more consistent throughout the school than it was previously. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good; activities are interesting, good use is made of interactive whiteboards and children are fully engaged in enjoyable learning.

There were some good lessons seen in both Key Stages, sharing common characteristics. These include very good use of 'Assessment for Learning' strategies. For example, effective peer and self evaluation, sometimes carried over from one lesson to another. Learning objectives are clearly incorporated into lessons and used well to assess how much children have learnt. Planning is often annotated with how well children have progressed in order to adapt the next lesson. Teachers have a better understanding of how to create effective learning conditions. They plan lessons well to meet the needs of different kinds of learners, such as those who learn by seeing what to do rather than hearing instructions. Interactive whiteboards are used well.

Marking has improved; the best is supportive yet challenging but this is not a consistent picture.

Satisfactory lessons sometimes lacked pace, activities did not involve children as much as they could, so they were not fully engaged. Presentation was less lively and fewer different approaches were used. Resources were not always best chosen; for example using whiteboards when books might have been better.

The curriculum is satisfactory, with strengths in extra curricular activities and good opportunities for residential visits in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Staff now have a better awareness of what a good curriculum looks like and a clearer idea of what they are aiming for.

Care and support for children is good and they are well known by staff. The academic guidance for children has improved to such a level that it is now good. Children know their targets well, they are confident in looking at each other's work to identify what has gone well and where improvements are needed. This is carried out in a positive, constructive manner and is really helping children to improve the quality of their work. Good displays in classrooms help children know where they are and where they need to get to in their learning.

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

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

### Leadership and management

The seconded headteacher has brought a sharp strategic overview and sense of urgency to the issues facing the school over the last term. He has produced highly focussed and succinct action plans, working very effectively with a range of partners to bring about rapid change in the school. This has had a significant effect on teaching and learning and assessment practice in particular. In a short space of time the school has made up ground in these areas to a standard broadly in line with that found nationally.

All classrooms have been observed. This monitoring has been of a high quality, with helpful feedback given to improve practice. Teachers view this activity as a developmental opportunity. Along with the observation of good practice in partner schools this has had a major impact on the pace of change. Staff have agreed targets linked to improvement priorities; full performance management arrangements will be put in place for the next academic year.

The senior leadership and management team feel empowered to drive change in the school. Structures have been adjusted to create teams of staff, for example, through curriculum team meetings led by senior managers. They have had training through paired observation and have begun to monitor lessons. Senior leaders now support coordinators and other staff effectively.

Classroom teachers have fully engaged in, and have in many aspects caught up with, national strategy developments. They work together effectively in teams and with local authority (LA) consultants to improve the classroom experience of children.

There have been significant changes to the governing body. A new chair and vice-chair have brought a renewed vigour to the role of holding the school to account. New additions to the team mean that governors have a good range of experience and expertise. They are kept well informed in a period of rapid change. They receive helpful reports from the headteacher and senior staff. Visits to key areas of the school's work ensure that they see at first hand the changes taking place and are able to report back on their findings. As a result they feel increasingly able to ask searching questions and tackle the issues facing the school. They urgently need to work with the LA to make a long term headship appointment and to make sure that any interim arrangements for the Autumn Term are secure.

The school, under its present leadership, has a good capacity for further improvement.

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

- Strengthen leadership and management through 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 – good progress

#### External support

The LA has played a full part in the rapid improvement of the school. Most vitally it has secured the services of an experienced and successful headteacher for two terms prior to a permanent appointment. It has arranged for teachers from the school to visit other successful schools to see good practice in action. Consultants from the LA Primary Strategy team have worked successfully with teachers in the school to develop teaching and learning approaches. This has been particularly successful in mathematics and phonics work. Additional Governors have been recruited and training provided. The School Link Adviser has sampled pupils' work alongside teaching staff to monitor improvements. The decisive action taken by the LA

has helped to ensure that, after a slow start, improvement in the school has accelerated during the last term.

### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures - satisfactory.

Progress seen in the term since the last monitoring visit - good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed, but no more than two in the next academic year.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that leadership capacity is extended in the school by fully involving senior leaders and subject coordinators in leading and monitoring provision in their areas.
- Ensure that the good progress seen in lessons and recent assessment is maintained and reflected in assessments and tests in Years 2 and 6.
- Build on the developing strengths in teaching so that most lessons are good and some are outstanding.
- Governors need to work with the LA to ensure continuity in effective Headship by appointing a permanent headteacher and ensuring that any interim arrangements are strong enough to support further improvements.

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

David Martin  
H M Inspector