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Ms Wendy Todd
The Interim Headteacher
Saxon Primary School
Briar Road
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Dear Ms Todd

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SAXON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit George Rayner, Additional Inspector and John Kennedy, HMI to your school on 20 and 21 June 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 November 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

Inspectors observed 15 lessons, scrutinised a range of documents and met with the interim headteacher, teachers, governors, a representative from the local authority, and the headteacher and deputy head from a local school providing support for Saxon School. Groups of pupils in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 were spoken to and their work discussed. Pupils' work across the school was also scrutinised.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in March 2007, there have been several staff changes; governors have appointed a substantive headteacher who will take up post in the next academic year. A new teacher has been employed for Year 1. A part-time special needs co-ordinator took up post in May and an additional higher-level teaching assistant has been appointed for next September. The governing body has received two resignations from governors, creating vacancies for a parent and a community governor. The deputy Headteacher and another member of staff were on

sick leave whilst undertaking this monitoring visit, their classes were covered by teachers on a temporary basis.

The school roll has continued to stabilise and there have been a very few pupils leaving and joining the school since March 2007.

Achievement and standards

The picture of improving standards in reading and mathematics continues to be maintained in Years 1 and 2 and, to a lesser extent, in writing. The improvement has been significant in reading and, for higher attaining pupils, also in mathematics. In these subjects, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Writing standards remain well below average, however, and achievement remains inadequate.

In Years 3 to 6 there is evidence that pupils' standards are beginning to rise. This is most obvious in Year 3. The legacy of previous inadequate progress is still considerable for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The 2007 national teacher assessments report standards as being above average in English and broadly average in mathematics. Standards observed in lessons and work samples, indicate that they remain at best in line with the national average. Standards in science in Year 6 remain below average. The ability of the pupils to carry out independently scientific investigations and their command of scientific vocabulary are lower than they should be for their age. Recent improvements to the science scheme of work make it more effective in promoting progress in the subject, but its introduction is too recent to have had a significant impact on the achievement of the oldest pupils.

In almost all observed lessons, pupils were seen to be making satisfactory progress and in six lessons, progress was good. In the majority of lessons teachers were planning for different ability levels, but did not provide sufficient additional challenge for the most able pupils so some of these pupils continue to underachieve. In a number of lessons, pupils' progress was limited because they had insufficient ability to work at a good pace unless being directly supervised. Lesson observations show that in some lessons, especially in Year 6, a minority of boys continue to make less progress than they should because they do not make enough effort in their work and are not always challenged about this by staff.

Progress in the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- Raise achievement and standards, particularly in mathematics and science – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

The good relationships pupils have with teachers and teaching assistants and generally with each other, contribute to their largely positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are happy at school and enjoy lessons. Lesson observations indicate that most pupils are receptive, motivated and willing to learn. However, the inattentive and

distracting behaviour of a small group of pupils in many classes and their under-developed learning habits had a negative impact on their learning and progress and that of others, who were keen to learn. Other pupils were quite vocal about how annoying this was, as they wanted to learn. Systems for identifying and recording patterns of this behaviour are not yet secure enough and as a result, insufficient information about patterns and causal factors is available to help whole school behaviour management. Generally behaviour in and around the school is good and there have been no exclusions since the last monitoring visit.

Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with the national average and with local targets. The overall attendance for the school and very high attendance of a significant number of pupils masks the relatively poor attendance of others. In Year 5 and 6 poorer attendance is particularly noticeable. A minority of pupils have attendance, which is below 90 percent; in most instances, this is contributing to the slow progress they are making. Individual tracking of pupils' progress and its link to attendance patterns is being put in place. The school has taken prompt steps to ask parents of these children for their support in improving attendance to 95 percent, pointing out its clear link with achievement. A number of pupils, many brought to school by their parents, still arrive late to school and lose valuable reading time as a consequence.

Pupils' enjoyment and participation were distinctive features of the assemblies observed. Pupils showed their singing skills and assemblies provided them with good opportunities for reflection, which contributed in particular to their social, moral and spiritual development. Pupils responded well to opportunities to play together and interact during break and lunchtimes; they were particularly pleased with the increased range of resources for play.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is now satisfactory overall, possibly best summed up by one pupil who commented, 'I'm learning much more'. The majority of lessons observed were satisfactory with a small number being good. This matches the school's own recent lesson observations, indicating an increase in the number of lessons judged satisfactory and a slight increase in the number of good lessons. As a consequence of better teaching most pupils are making at least satisfactory progress.

Improvement in the quality of teaching is reflected in a greater consistency in planning and lesson organisation. Tasks and expectations are generally appropriate. Lesson objectives are set out and pupils understand these. This has contributed to improvements in the pace of lessons. In most lessons seen, teachers were planning for different ability levels and matching work to ability. Pupils understood this well and commented favourably on how it helped their learning. However, this differentiation did not always provide sufficient additional challenge for the most able pupils.

More opportunities for paired and group work gave pupils greater variety of tasks, helped their thinking and social skills and provided some good opportunities for them to explain their reasoning. Good questioning techniques also encouraged pupil participation and helped them understand new learning. In some instances, paired work was not crisp or pacy enough and tasks were not broken down sufficiently well, which resulted in some pupils not being clear about tasks or losing interest.

Resources, such as electronic white boards are being used to enhance learning, with pupils commenting favourably on the impact that developments in information technology have made to their learning. Support from teaching assistants is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress and in some instances of wider support can be seen ensuring pupils of all abilities remain on task. However, opportunities for their deployment to support classroom management and help extend higher achieving pupils are under-utilised. Pupils have responded well to increased opportunities for more active learning, especially when undertaking investigations, which has secured greater pupil engagement and interest.

The quality, quantity and helpfulness of marking has improved, although there are still some inconsistencies in helping pupils understand where they have gone wrong, what levels they are working at and what steps they need to take to improve. The presentation of work has improved, although pupils' writing is still well below that expected for their age. Homework is now being set more regularly and consistently. Parents and pupils have commented positively about this change.

Pupils were aware of group targets but less clear about their own individual targets, especially pupils in Years 5 and 6 who sometimes confused these with lesson objectives. Pupils did not always know what levels they were working at nor therefore what steps they needed to take to move on to the next stage, these pupils in Years 5 and 6, said they and their parents would welcome information on this.

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

- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring lessons have a brisk pace and activities match what pupils need to learn next - satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The interim headteacher has continued to secure improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and in the leadership and management of the school, which parents have commented on positively. Effective and substantial monitoring of teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science lessons by the Headteacher and partner school is taking place. There is a clear expectation that identified points for improvement will be acted upon. This focus is beginning to impact positively on the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that children are making, especially at Key Stage 1.

A more accurate audit of the progress that pupils are making is providing all teachers and the senior staff with a clearer picture of achievement. However, the causal link between attendance and achievement and low-level off task behaviour has not been sufficiently identified or analysed. Good policies are in place for safeguarding pupils and equal opportunities, which have been recently reviewed.

Staff, including the support staff, have been in receipt of very good coaching and professional development from the headteacher, the partnership work with New Haw Primary School and the local authority consultants.

Following an audit of governors' skills, appropriate link roles have been created to subject areas and a policy for governor visits to classrooms established. Governance of the school, despite two vacancies, is now good. They have undertaken significant training, have a very good understanding of the data about pupils' standards and their progress and are able to ask focused questions about what is being done to address shortcomings. Governors are now in a much more secure position to challenge than at the last monitoring visit. Shared training with the partner primary school has also explored issues such as the vision for the school. The governing body committees have recently been rationalised; the two resulting committees now deal with issues in a more holistic fashion.

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

- ensure strategic plans clearly identify the key steps required to improve teaching and learning and to secure a faster rate of improvement – satisfactory progress
- ensure that senior teachers have consistent impact on the standards of teaching and learning in their specialist areas – satisfactory progress

External support

A new school improvement partner has been appointed, she has a good understanding of the current position of the school and its longer term needs. The link with a neighbouring primary school has continued to develop very positively, creating excellent professional development for all staff, including the support staff and governors.

The local authority external consultancy support continues to be provided for literacy, numeracy and particularly science, but in appropriate proportion, given the links with New Haw primary school. This is in line with the local authority support and intervention plan.

Local authority officers convene with the interim Headteacher and chair of governors regularly at the 'additional support and intervention programme' (ASIP) meetings. The interim headteacher provides an accurate report on the progress made at each meeting.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

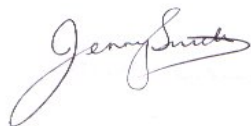
Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Maintain a log of pupils' significant misbehaviour.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Executive Director for Children and Young People for Surrey.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Jennifer Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector