

19 June 2007

Mrs Beverly Hunnable
Headteacher
Fairstead Community Primary School
William Booth Road
Fairstead
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE30 4RR

Dear Mrs Hunnable

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF FAIRSTEAD
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOLSCHOOL**

Introduction

Following my visit with Katherine Yates and Gillian Smith, Additional Inspectors to your school on 6 and 7 June 2007, 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 January 2007.

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 the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle managers, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

The school continues to face significant staffing issues highlighted in the previous inspection and although the school has tried to recruit new staff two teaching posts remain vacant.

Achievement and standards

Despite some recent improvements pupil achievement remains inadequate throughout the school. Pupils in all classes including those in the Foundation Stage are too far behind where they ought to be due to the high proportion of inadequate teaching and the instability caused by the lack of permanent teachers. The quality of teaching has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection to help pupils make the progress they are capable of. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work by inspectors confirm that in most lessons pupils make insufficient progress and overall standards are well below the national average in reading, writing, mathematics and science in both key stages.

Teachers lack a detailed understanding of how well pupils should be achieving and are not sufficiently involved in tracking pupils' progress or setting targets for improvement. For example, pupils in Year 6 who reached the expected levels in mathematics in Year 2 tests have been set targets this year which are too low for them. Some improvements have been made; a few pupils have made better progress in reading as a result of catch-up initiatives and teachers are benefiting from support received through the Intensive Support Programme (ISP) to improve their teaching of literacy and numeracy. However, the rate of improvement is too slow and too many pupils continue to under-achieve.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- increase the amount of progress that pupils make and raise the standards they attain in reading, writing, mathematics and science – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school and that behaviour is improving, but also expressed some concerns about bullying. The number of pupils excluded this year has fallen but attendance during the inspection was notably below local and national averages. Pupils say they feel listened to and consider the school council has an important role to play in airing their views with senior teachers. They feel that work set in lessons is often too easy for them and want more opportunities to learn using computers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are inadequate. The pace of improvements made is too slow mainly because the efforts to raise the quality of education are severely hampered by continued staff absence and problems with teacher

recruitment. Subject managers including a local authority improvement teacher now meet regularly to review teachers' lesson plans and develop ways of providing work for pupils of different abilities and interests. Senior teachers have started to undertake regular lesson observations and scrutinise pupils' books to give teachers feedback on the quality of their work and identify aspects of good practice. An increasing number of teachers share with pupils what they are expected to learn and are beginning to use computer technology to stimulate pupils' interest.

However, the impact of these improvements is too variable and the overall quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate. This is because not all teachers use an agreed lesson planning format, marking of books is inconsistent and few teachers plan interesting and challenging lessons. There are significant inconsistencies in the management of pupils' behaviour and too many pupils do not listen and at times, impair the learning of others. New information and communication technology (ICT) equipment is not used as often as it should be and several teachers lack confidence in using interactive whiteboards.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- take immediate action to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning are at least satisfactory throughout the school - inadequate progress

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are inadequate. The headteacher has worked hard to implement some improvements, particularly to the classroom environment and clarify what is expected of staff, but this has had very little impact on promoting consistency in teaching and learning or in improving pupil progress. Leaders and managers, including governors are making little impact on resolving the three key issues facing the school. There is insufficient priority or urgency attached to addressing the key weaknesses highlighted in the previous inspection and the school is not on track to meet timescales set by the local authority to free itself from special measures.

The action taken to resolve serious staffing issues including long-term staff absence and recruitment of new teachers is too slow and currently the school does not know whether it will have a full complement of teachers for the start of the new academic year. The inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and lack of continuity in permanent staff are having a direct, detrimental impact on pupils' behaviour and progress. The school still cannot demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve; the leadership team has been extended to include some middle leaders but further changes are planned for next term and subject leadership is less secure in science and ICT than it is in literacy

and numeracy. Governors are working to enhance school facilities but they lack a clear understanding of the issues facing the school and the role they have to play in driving school improvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- develop the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels so that measures to improve the quality of education are implemented systematically and as a matter of urgency - inadequate progress.

External support

The LA has acted promptly to set up a project board to oversee school improvement and coordinate a good range of support. It has facilitated mentor support for senior leaders and is taking a lead role in helping the school to attract new personnel. The LA's statement of action is satisfactory and sets clear, aspirational targets for recovery.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– inadequate progress.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- resolve all staffing issues as a matter of urgency to ensure the school has a full compliment of competent and effective teachers for the start of next term
- ensure much greater consistency to behaviour management in lessons
- collate clear evidence of the progress made in resolving the three key issues facing the school and evaluate the impact of the actions taken to improve achievement and standards.

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

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector.