

Cambridge Education  
Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

Direct Tel 01223 578500  
Direct Fax 01223 578501

Email – [risp.inspections@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:risp.inspections@ofsted.gov.uk)

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The Headteacher  
Farnsfield St Michael's Church of England Primary (Voluntary Aided) School,  
Branston Avenue,  
Farnsfield,  
Nottinghamshire  
NG228JZ

Dear Mr Mansfield

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

### Introduction

Following my visit with Brian Downes, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 June 2007, 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 May 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

### Evidence

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

### Context

The acting headteacher is leaving in September to take up another headship within the LA. A substantive headteacher has now been appointed. The LA has successfully negotiated with his current school for early release at October half term. It is proposed that the deputy headteacher, supported by a headteacher mentor, will oversee the management of the school in the interim period

## Achievement and standards

The school has made very good progress in the collection and analysis of data and assessment information. This detailed analysis of teacher assessment, validated by optional SATs tests now provides an accurate view of strengths and areas that the school still needs to address. Assessment across the school is collected every half term and teachers moderate their assessment in teams. Targets are increasingly aspirational and based on an accurate analysis of what cohorts of pupils should achieve.

Achievement in the Foundation Stage is good. The Foundation Profile is now complete and will inform future planning in Key Stage 1. Work has started throughout the school on identifying and catering for the needs of more able, gifted and talented pupils. Assessment for learning approaches are establishing expectations for pupils based on clear learning targets.

Key Stage 1 results show considerable improvement in attainment, moving from below the national average in 2006 to above in 2007. This improvement is supported by the good progress seen in lessons during the visit. Writing is less strong this year than reading and mathematics, although the developments in 'big writing' and 'VCOP' approaches should improve this aspect as pupils move through Key Stage 2.

School analysis indicates that the present Year 6 will achieve the highest standards seen in the school and will be above the national average in all subjects. The performance at higher levels in mathematics is not expected to be as strong as in English and science. The cohort overall has a higher level of prior attainment than in 2006, being around the national average on entry. Indications suggest that the progress made in English may be good, will be less strong in mathematics but above average overall.

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 – good progress

## Personal development and well-being

The personal development of children is good. Children behave well and are increasingly enthusiastic about their work. Children work well together and help and support each other, although there are as yet no formal means for older pupils to help younger ones, for example in being playground buddies. This is something the school council is keen to see develop. This group now meets regularly and is ready to accept greater responsibility for improving the school. Pupils show that they can take responsibility, both within the classroom and in helping to organise assemblies. Relationships between children and with adults are very strong. Pupils feel that effective action is taken to keep them safe, particularly from bullying.

Attendance is above the national average and pupils are punctual to lessons at all times, responding quickly to the whistle to mark the end of playtime.

### Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. The number of good and better lessons is steadily increasing with no inadequate teaching seen during the monitoring visit. Provision for the school's most able pupils and those identified as gifted and talented is not yet developed well enough and these pupils make less progress than others. As a result of improvements in teaching and learning, pupils not only make better progress but they enjoy lessons more. In general, marking of pupils' work continues to improve and is more consistent across classes and subjects. Teachers manage behaviour in their classes well. Working relationships between pupils and with their teachers are good and no time is lost in lessons over correcting poor behaviour. Teachers and teaching assistants continue to show a high level of personal care and support for pupils. Lesson planning is good. Teachers make better use of assessment data to track pupils' progress and to set more challenging work.

Where teaching and learning are most effective, teachers plan a range of varied and challenging tasks which move at brisk pace, involve pupils in their learning and maintain interest. The greater range of teaching strategies has significantly improved pupils' progress because of their increased interest and concentration. This now needs to be further extended especially to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.

Where teaching is not better than satisfactory teachers do not always plan well enough for the range of ability found in classes, especially for the most able pupils. The pace of some lessons is not always dynamic enough to raise standards significantly. In other lessons the instructions given to pupils for the work they are to do are unclear and time is lost in the resulting confusion.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets requirements. There are good opportunities for residential visits in Years 3 to 6. A good range of sporting and enrichment activities is available but these are also mainly for pupils in these age groups. Provision for younger pupils is not as well developed.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The school has further improved academic guidance so that the school can identify and improve strengths and weaknesses and what needs further development. Target setting for individual pupils continues to progress. They know their targets and what they need to do to improve their work.

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- good progress.

#### Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has continued to give a strong strategic direction to the school and build confidence. He has linked monitoring and evaluation, priorities, budget plans and training plans into an interim school development plan. This will incorporate priorities for the autumn term to cover a period of time after he leaves and before the new substantive headteacher can take up post.

The main impact of this strong leadership has been to strengthen management across the school. This can be seen in improved curriculum leadership, with better records kept in coordinators files of planning, monitoring and other subject information. Staff work together in teams, making the best use of expertise in the planning and delivery of lessons. Some senior staff have undertaken joint observations and are more confident in observing lessons to check that recent initiatives are being fully implemented. A new performance management policy has been agreed with a clear timeline for the first cycle of activity. This will link clearly to school priorities and help staff to understand their contribution to school improvement. By empowering staff the headteacher has ensured that improvements in teaching and learning have continued. Teachers have successfully adapted their classroom practice and are confident of making further planned improvements.

The deputy headteacher will manage the school in the interim period, mentored by an experienced headteacher. With the support of other senior staff this should ensure a continuity of approach into the autumn term. The new headteacher is coming to the school with a good track record of success in his present headship and the school is looking forward to him taking up the post.

Governors now have a clearer strategic role. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement and receive very comprehensive information from the acting headteacher. They are also involved in a range of monitoring activities and have been proactive in recruiting a new headteacher. Recent appointments and staffing changes have further strengthened teaching.

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 local authority has a clear plan for continuing support to the school through and beyond the period of special measures. A leading maths teacher has supported the formulation of a calculation policy and an advanced skills teacher will work with the school in the summer term. There has been support for work scrutiny but planned joint observations have not taken place as the LA has felt increasingly confident that the school can manage and monitor its own improvement.

The LA has supported the school well through the recruitment process and in interim arrangements, although there have been some differences of view with some governors over the best way to cover leadership during this period. If any unexpected difficulties do arise the LA and governors are committed to reviewing the proposed arrangements.

## Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures - good.

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

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed in the period between substantive headteachers.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Improve provision for more able, gifted and talented children to ensure that they make good progress
- Disseminate the best practice in teaching, particularly in managing the wider range of active learning, to ensure that pupils make maximum progress.
- Governors and the local authority should ensure that interim management arrangements focus clearly on the improvements planned for the Autumn Term.

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

Her Majesty's Inspector