

18 July 2007

Mrs M Vaissiere
Acting Headteacher
Bawdeswell Primary School
Fakenham Road
Bawdeswell
Dereham
Norfolk
NR20 4RR

Dear Mrs Vaissiere,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION of BAWDESWELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on the 5th July, 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 February 2007.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

HMI observed lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, nominated staff, three governors, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Immediately after the inspection, the LA seconded a member of the county headteacher service to lead the school. The acting headteacher will remain in post until the permanent leadership of the school is secure. Two teachers share the role of senior teacher. At the time of the monitoring visit, most Year 6 pupils were away on a school trip and two Key Stage 2 teachers were not teaching their usual classes.

Achievement and standards

Following a steady rise in standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 over the last two years, pupils have not done as well in 2007. No pupils attained higher levels in any subject. However, in relation to their starting points, they made satisfactory progress. With only six pupils in Year 2, the cohort is much smaller than in previous years. This factor needs to be taken into account when making direct comparisons from year to year.

The improvement in progress made by Key Stage 2 pupils is satisfactory but is erratic in some year groups. In Year 3, Year 4 and Year 5, some make slow progress, especially in mathematics and writing. In Year 6, they make good progress in a short time. The latest Year 6 test results provide evidence of this accelerated progress. Overall, Year 6 pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science is better in 2007 than in 2006. Preliminary analysis of the Year 6 statutory assessment tests indicates that most pupils' have met their targets and attained scores which are at least in line with national expectations in all subjects. However, in English, there is still too wide a discrepancy between their reading and writing scores. There are too few higher attaining pupils who achieve well in writing.

A much improved system for tracking pupils' progress throughout the school has been introduced recently. Pupils are set challenging targets and they are aware of their targets. Suitable strategies have been introduced to moderate teachers' judgements. The school is rightly focusing upon improving the quality of writing through regular half-termly assessment of different pieces of writing. There is now greater accuracy in the assessment of pupils' writing. These assessments show that pupils are making better progress in writing than previously although they still have some way to go to close the gap between their reading and writing scores.

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

- raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 - satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being continue to be satisfactory. The reorganisation of classes following the inspection has had a positive impact on improving the motivation of the higher attaining Year 5 pupils. In most lessons, pupils are keen to learn and show interest. In Key Stage 2, where work is not well matched to the pupils' abilities, the pupils become passive learners and do not contribute to the lesson.

Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school. They play happily with one another in the playground. Behaviour in the lessons observed was good. Relationships are good between pupils and adults.

Quality of provision

Although there is a small amount of weak teaching in Key Stage 2, the improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the school is satisfactory with the help of advisory support from the local authority and improved procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, school leaders are working hard to eradicate weaknesses in teaching. The majority of lessons are well structured. The oldest pupils are set challenging targets and expectations are high. The monitoring of pupils' progress towards these targets is developing. Where teaching is weaker, there is a lack of pace to the lesson and tasks are not well matched to pupils' differing abilities. The provision for the youngest pupils and those in Key Stage 1 remains good. A good initiative has been the reorganisation of two Key Stage 2 classes. Higher attaining Year 5 pupils have joined the Year 6 class, thus reducing the number of pupils in the Year 4/5 class. Pupils with additional learning needs and disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants.

Teachers are giving pupils more opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences in subjects other than English. Pupils are responding well by producing more extended pieces of writing. The evidence in pupils' books shows that fewer worksheets are being used. However, the presentation of pupils' work remains an issue and not all pupils' class work is marked regularly. Marking is insufficiently focused upon giving pupils' advice on how to improve their work.

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

- improving the quality of teaching and learning - satisfactory progress.
- reviewing the class groupings across the school - good progress.
- setting challenging targets and rigorously monitoring pupils' progress towards meeting them - satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The appointment of an acting headteacher immediately after the inspection has resulted in a number of improvements. Rapid progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses in leadership and management. The acting headteacher provides clear direction. Subject leaders have responded well to her decisive leadership and have made a good start in monitoring standards and the quality of teaching and learning. They recognise that there is

considerable work to be done to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress and have drawn up focused action plans to help them. Roles and responsibilities are well defined and understood. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils in the absence of the headteacher are much improved with the establishment of a full-time senior teacher post.

The school is adopting a well-staged approach to improvement planning. A comprehensive strategic plan is now in place which prioritises the issues raised in the inspection report and defines the action to be taken. There are well focused criteria against which to measure the impact of the actions. Clear timescales are identified. The school is currently on target to meet the deadlines set in the plan. Links with a neighbouring school have been established and subject leaders are benefiting from the professional dialogue with other colleagues.

Senior managers and governors are aware of where weaknesses in teaching and learning lie. All job descriptions have been reviewed. Plans are in place to implement performance management procedures in the autumn term. In September, due to budgetary constraints, the number of classes will be reduced from four to three. Parents have been kept well informed of the changes.

Under the current temporary leadership arrangements, the school is well placed to continue to improve. The challenge is to maintain the momentum permanently. The governing body has produced its own action plan and is committed to sustaining improvement. It is planned to review the self evaluation document in the autumn term.

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

- addressing the weaknesses in leadership and management identified in the inspection report - good progress.

External support

The LA has provided well targeted support to assist the school to address the weaknesses identified during the inspection in February 2007. In addition to seconding an acting headteacher from the county headteacher service, intensive support is being provided for literacy and numeracy. Already, this support has contributed to the rapid progress made in improving the leadership and management of the school. The allocation of school development adviser time is generous and appropriate. The LA has appointed an additional governor while the school is a cause for concern. A project board has been convened and meets regularly. The LA's statement of action is clear and well focused upon bringing about the necessary improvements to remove the school from special measures within the set timeframe of two years.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- gain greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and the rate of pupils' progress throughout Key Stage 2.
- increase progress and raise attainment in mathematics and writing.
- improve the quality of marking.
- improve the presentation of pupils' work.

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

Tricia Pritchard

H M Inspector