

8 November 2007

Mrs S. O'Connor
Acting Headteacher
Fairstead Community Primary School
William Booth Road
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE30 4RR

Dear Mrs O'Connor

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF FAIRSTEAD
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Glynn Storer and Meg Hackney, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 6 and 7 November 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 January 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – *inadequate*

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – *satisfactory*

Newly qualified teachers *may not be appointed* without reference to HMI.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
H M Inspector.

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF FAIRSTEAD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 6 and 7 November 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work, met with the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher, a group of managers, the school council, a group of Year 5 and 6 pupils and two representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

Following the first monitoring visit in June 2007 the headteacher left the school. Since September, the previous deputy headteacher has been appointed acting headteacher and the teacher responsible for pupils with special educational needs appointed acting deputy headteacher. Five new teachers and three new teaching assistants have been appointed. One of the new appointments is a senior teacher, who takes up her post in January 2008 and a business manager takes up her post in December. A county improvement teacher from the LA has been appointed for one year from September to lead the Foundation Stage and a consultant from the LA has been appointed to work in school one day per week to oversee the coordination of numeracy. The governing body has been replaced by an Interim Executive Board with effect from November 2007.

Achievement and standards

Results in national tests in 2007 show a slight improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected levels in literacy and numeracy, but overall, standards remain well below the national average. The school's own data shows that up to September this year, significant numbers of pupils in all years have not made sufficient progress in reading, writing, mathematics or science. However, since the start of this term significant steps have been taken to address this and inspectors found that pupils are now learning in classrooms; observations of lessons and scrutiny of their books shows that the majority of pupils are making progress.

Teachers now have an improved understanding of their role in moving pupils forward in manageable, incremental steps. Newly introduced procedures for target-setting and tracking pupils' progress are proving to be effective in raising achievement in literacy and numeracy. However, these improvements have not been extended into science lessons. With the help of a consultant, provided by the LA, the school has collated evidence of pupils' progress since September and can demonstrate that, albeit at a steady rate, most pupils are achieving satisfactorily, but this is yet to impact on standards, which remain inadequate.

Judgement

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 on the priority for further improvement identified in the first monitoring visit in June 2007:

- 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 – *satisfactory*.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly; the school is a much calmer and productive environment in which to learn. Pupils now speak proudly about their school and value the many improvements made since the start of term. As one pupil states: 'We now try harder and time goes very quickly because we have so much fun'. Pupils find the school a much happier place to be because behaviour is managed effectively during lessons and there is now much less bullying in the playground. The school has introduced a programme of personal and social education and pupils feel that this is helping them to foster better relationships and a deeper awareness of the needs of others. Pupils say that their attitudes have changed because of the respect shown to them by adults who now take notice of their opinions and ideas. They value the improved reward system which has brought about a more consistent and positive approach towards encouraging and celebrating good behaviour and personal achievement. They particularly love joining the headteacher for lunch on 'the top table' as a special reward for good behaviour.

Attendance has improved since the start of September and is now above the national average, mainly because pupils want to come to school and an improved monitoring system to follow-up absence has been introduced. A new breakfast club is already helping to improve pupils' punctuality, attendance and give additional care for vulnerable pupils.

Judgement

Progress on the additional areas for improvement identified in the first monitoring visit in June 2007:

Ensure much greater consistency to behaviour management in lessons – *satisfactory*.

Quality of provision

The school has successfully resolved problems with staff absence and has taken decisive action to recruit new staff that has strengthened the quality of teaching and learning. The acting headteacher has increased the frequency and rigour of monitoring and, in doing so, has improved the consistency and quality of teaching and learning. The result is that teachers feel valued, well supported in their work and consequently, staff morale and team spirit have improved. The acting headteacher has acted firmly where teaching has been found to be inadequate and continues to

provide support and challenge for a small number of teachers who are not yet operating as effectively as their colleagues.

Most teachers now manage pupils' behaviour effectively and pupils understand what is expected of them. Teachers use a common approach to lesson planning and are beginning to plan different tasks to accommodate all learners, but in a few lessons a small number of pupils who need intensive support are left to struggle and do not make sufficient progress.

All teachers are tracking how well pupils are doing and setting realistic and attainable targets to raise their achievement in literacy and numeracy. Inspectors' discussions with pupils show that they understand how to achieve these targets and are keen to check teachers' comments in their books and view the target wall in classrooms to see whether they have achieved them. This is very new and needs more time to become firmly embedded in day-to-day teaching. The deployment of teaching assistants is more effective, particularly in supporting small groups of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All of these measures are beginning to make a difference but need much more time to make a significant impact on the legacy of underachievement that still is prevalent amongst many pupils.

Judgement

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 is at least satisfactory throughout the school - *satisfactory*.

Progress on the additional areas for improvement identified in the first monitoring visit in June 2007:

- Resolve all staffing issues as a matter of urgency to ensure that the school has a full complement of competent and effective teachers from the start of next term - *satisfactory*.

Leadership and management

The impact of the newly appointed acting headteacher has been dramatic. Staff morale is vastly improved and teachers, teaching assistants, pupils and parents speak very positively about the improvements made since September. There is a far more positive ethos within the school due to the refurbishment of the learning environment and to the improved, positive attitudes of pupils and staff. The headteacher, ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher has instigated important changes by sharing her expectations with all staff and establishing clear procedures that emphasise the importance of children and their learning. All staff now understand the scale of the task in resolving the main priorities facing the school and the role they must play in improving the quality of education that pupils receive. The changes that have taken place so far are working but have not had enough time to demonstrate whether they will lead to higher overall standards.

The school is currently reliant on a significant input from LA personnel and requires more time to demonstrate it can operate effectively by itself with a full complement

of permanent, full time staff. The school has proposals to extend the senior management team this year and is already building capacity to improve further. Subject leadership in literacy is developing well mainly because further management responsibilities for monitoring teacher effectiveness and evaluating progress have been delegated to her. Subject leadership in science is inadequate. A LA consultant is providing effective coordination of numeracy and will remain in school to provide support for the new coordinator who takes up her post next term. A LA improvement teacher is leading effectively the much needed improvements in the Foundation Stage and early signs of improvement are encouraging. An Interim Executive Board, coordinated by the LA, has recently replaced the governing body; it will convene for the first time this week to oversee progress made on meeting the priorities in the school improvement plan within the timescales set by the LA.

Judgement

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*.

External support

The LA has taken decisive action before and during this term to improve the quality of education provided by the school. It has been instrumental in resolving inadequacies in leadership and management and appointing an acting senior leadership team to move the school out of its state of inertia and get it moving in the right direction. Significant resource has been allocated to help to refurbish the school and to provide good quality support from LA personnel to promote learning, raise achievement and support the acting headteacher in her work.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all of the recent changes become firmly embedded so that they lead to improved outcomes for all pupils.
- Extend the good practice in target setting and tracking currently being developed in literacy and numeracy, into science.