

12 November 2007

Mrs Julie Barke
The Headteacher
St James CEVA Primary School
Harleston Road
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN5 7AG

Dear Mrs Barke

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST JAMES CEVA
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Stephanie Lacey, Additional Inspector, to your school on 31 October and 1 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 November 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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, the Director of the Children and Young People's Service for Northamptonshire and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST JAMES CEVA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 31 October and 1 November 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with groups of pupils, the headteacher, nominated staff, the chair of governors, an experienced governor and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the first visit, the school has reorganised its class structure. In addition two teachers have been appointed, as well as an acting deputy headteacher. The school has had the added challenge of admitting 36 pupils since September, of whom approximately half speak English as an additional language (EAL).

Achievement and standards

Unvalidated test results for 2007 show that pupils' overall achievement and standards in Years 2 and 6 remain inadequate. However, standards in mathematics in Year 6 rose considerably because of the effective use of additional support in Key Stage 2 and a general improvement in teaching. Achievement in English remains exceptionally low because standards in writing are well below average.

Assessment information is being used more effectively to give different groups of pupils additional support. However, it is not yet being used by some teachers to plan activities that are pitched at the correct level for all pupils. Pupils now have targets based on assessment information to guide them on how they can improve their work in English and mathematics. At the time of this monitoring visit they had not yet had an impact on the rate of progress pupils make.

Many pupils join school outside normal admission dates in all year groups. The school has correctly identified that pupils in Year 6 in 2007 who have been in school throughout Key Stage 2 make progress that is satisfactory, but it is not sufficient enough to raise the very low standards they start with. School assessment information shows that pupils in Years 3 and 4 in 2007 made good progress that is bridging the gap between the standards they achieve and national expectations.

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

- raise standards and improve achievement by establishing clear assessment procedures so that teachers know how well pupils are doing and can plan work matched to their needs – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils have settled well into their new classes and behaviour remains good in most lessons. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and friendly. As a result, most pupils are keen to please their teachers and are attentive and hard working. Children in the Reception classes are already confident in their new surroundings. Most conform to school routines and show initiative and independence. A large number of pupils have joined the school this term in other classes. They too have settled well because of the good care provided by class teachers and helpers.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development remains satisfactory. This is because the school makes sound provision for their spiritual, social and cultural development. The school has worked successfully to help pupils to understand the difference between right and wrong and this has contributed to their good behaviour.

School information shows that the attendance rate has risen, but remains well below average. The school is continuing to work closely with those families whose children's attendance is erratic and this is beginning to make a difference. The school is now celebrating individual pupils' good attendance by presenting stickers and awarding class attendance cups. This is appreciated by pupils.

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

- work with families of pupils who are frequently absent to improve attendance – satisfactory.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved overall with an increase in the proportion of teaching that is good. However, there still remains a very small proportion of inadequate teaching. This improvement has been encouraged by the new class structure, which has enabled teachers to plan together in teams and share good practice. Consequently, lessons are better structured and in English and mathematics teachers are planning different activities for the different groups of pupils in the class. In some lessons these activities are not as well matched as they could be and sometimes pupils are not supported or challenged. Generally, teaching assistants are deployed well to support individuals and groups and this has been especially beneficial to those pupils who have joined the school mid year. Teachers have conscientiously implemented the new marking policy, but sometimes the comments made in pupils' books are difficult for them to understand.

Planning for work in different subjects has also improved. Again, this has been strengthened by the new class structures and the opportunities for teachers to work in teams. Planning for English and mathematics is thorough and intervention strategies have successfully enabled lower attaining pupils to make better progress. Writing standards remain too low and this is partly because opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills in other subjects are not exploited. The school is continuing to enliven the curriculum by planning interesting and engaging activities and making

links between subjects. But, these tend to be ad hoc rather than part of a planned programme of work. Planning in the Foundation Stage remains a strength and helps children to make a good start.

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

- plan the curriculum so that pupils experience a variety of subjects, study relevant and interesting topics and have opportunities to develop their basic skills – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to give a strong lead to the school and other leaders are now in a better position to support her. Assessment information has been successfully used by English and mathematics subject leaders to provide additional support for groups of pupils. This work is supported by the effective inclusion team which is well led. Strengths and weaknesses in teaching have been identified and new measures have been put in place to improve provision, for example the English planning record that all teachers now use. However, the effects of some changes to teaching are not known because leaders have not yet had the opportunity to check the work of pupils in lessons. Other leaders are taking greater responsibility for improving the provision in their subjects and are preparing to report to governors.

Governance has strengthened since the last visit. Training and a reorganisation of responsibilities means that governors are now well placed to hold the school to account.

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

- involve subject leaders in taking active roles to improve teaching and the curriculum – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority and diocese continue to give the school good support that is appreciated by the teachers and headteacher and which has contributed to the improvements in leadership and provision. A large increase in pupils who have English as an additional language has caused a strain on the school's resources and the LA has not yet given sufficient practical support to help the school to deal with this situation.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the rate of progress by ensuring that all teachers understand how to use assessment information to pitch lessons at the correct level for pupils.
- Ensure that school leaders check that recent improvements in teaching and learning are being applied in all classes.
- Raise the standard of writing by planning regular opportunities for pupils to practice their skills in other subjects.