

29 February 2008

Ms H Okrafo-Smart
Interim Headteacher
The Bardney Church of England and Methodist School
Henry Lane
Bardney
Lincolnshire
LN3 5XJ

Dear Ms H Okrafo-Smart

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BARDNEY CHURCH of ENGLAND and METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 27-28 February, 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 May 2007. 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikić
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BARDNEY CHURCH of ENGLAND and METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 27-28 February 2008

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, members of staff, School Improvement Partner (SIP), chair of governors, and a Senior School Improvement Advisor from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last visit the interim headteacher has become a permanent appointment of the LA for four days per week, assigned to take the school through the period of special measures. It has been agreed to maintain current staffing levels despite financial constraints. The Year 6 teacher post has been made permanent. A new chair of governors was appointed in the autumn term. Vacancies exist for three governors. The high level of support has continued for the newly qualified teacher (NQT). The school has had difficulty in sustaining quality, consistent cover to meet the entitlement for the NQT and management time for the deputy head. The long term absence of a teaching assistant has continued.

Achievement and standards

The school recognises that standards of attainment remain too low and that achievement is inadequate. The legacy of slow progress and inconsistent teaching means that pupils have significant gaps in their learning. Although the quality of some pupils' work is in line with expected standards, there are fundamental weaknesses in reading, writing and numeracy which will take time to tackle. The school's own data identifies significant levels of underachievement. In lessons observed rates of progress remain too variable ranging from good to inadequate. Pupils are responding well to the high expectations set in the Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 6 where learning is challenging and work on assessment is having a positive impact on progress. Current progress in Years 2 to 5 is not yet sufficient to enable pupils to catch up.

Improvements in whole school assessment, moderation arrangements, and the tracking of progress in writing and numeracy is leading to a more accurate view of pupils' attainment and expected rates of progress. The analysis is yet to extend to reading, or to identify clearly enough the gaps or relative weaknesses in pupils' learning in order to inform planning in a systematic and consistent way. Pupils are more aware of their learning targets and can identify general areas to improve. This is a stronger feature with older learners. Marking does not consistently guide pupils' on how to improve the quality of their work.

Targets for literacy and numeracy are now more robust and assessment data can be used to identify target groups for additional intervention.

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

- Improve achievement and standards, especially for higher attaining pupils and involve all pupils thoroughly in target setting and in measuring progress – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

In general pupils are well behaved and have good attitudes to school. They display positive relationships to staff and support each other well in the classroom. Pupils respond well to the rewards system and readily take on responsibility. Although a period of sickness led to a slight dip in attendance figures recently the high profile on this aspect has been maintained. Attendance is broadly in line with national averages. Suitable steps have been taken to reduce the number of term time holidays in consultation with governors and parents.

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

- Implement successfully the plans that have been drawn up to improve pupils' attendance – satisfactory

Quality of provision

Some aspects of teaching have improved but weaknesses remain. Teachers have higher expectations of pupils supported by a more consistent approach to behaviour management which is providing a settled learning environment. The quality of teaching is similar to the first visit and matches closely with the school and SIP evaluations. Half the lessons seen were consistently good with others judged satisfactory or inadequate resulting in uneven progress. There is evidence of greater consistency in the use of learning objectives and success criteria but in too many lessons they are not tailored enough to meet the needs of all learners, to build on prior attainment or to accelerate progress. Pupils across the school have more opportunities for structured paired and group work which has increased their engagement in lessons. More opportunities are provided for assessment with greater involvement of pupils in assessing their learning. However, this is not yet rigorous enough in some classes to enable teachers to gain an accurate picture of pupils' learning and progress.

Many new teaching and learning strategies have been introduced to staff linked to planning and assessment. However, not all teachers are putting these into practice consistently which is leading to slow progress in some lessons. The focus on writing and problem solving supported by LA consultants has led to a more collaborative approach across staff and raised the profile of subject leaders. Teaching assistants are not always effectively deployed to enhance the quality of learning because opportunities are missed throughout the lesson to work with individual or small groups to accelerate pupils' progress.

Leaders have strengthened the frequency and quality of monitoring activities to provide detailed feedback to support improvement. There is evidence of lesson

observations, planning and work scrutiny to demonstrate the expectations of leaders. Individual professional needs have been identified more sharply to address weaker aspects of teaching such as planning. Subject leaders for English, mathematics and science have conducted pupil progress meetings in each year group to gather feedback on provision to inform action plans, and to enable good practice to be shared.

There have been some improvements to the curriculum with the focus on cross curricular writing, problem solving, investigative science, and specialist input for French, art and drama although discrete teaching remains the norm in Years 2 to 6.

The use of more regular tracking in writing and numeracy is providing more opportunities for academic guidance. Pupils are more aware of their targets although marking and feedback to support next steps remains inconsistent. Pupils do not always have designated quality time to respond to teacher comments or to make improvements in their work. Presentation has rightly been raised as a priority across the school to secure greater consistency.

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

- Ensure that teachers use accurate assessments of pupils' progress to devise lessons that interest and challenge all pupils – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The school's leadership and management have been strengthened by the decision to confirm the leadership arrangement, bringing stability to the school. Since the last visit the interim headteacher has taken effective steps to delegate responsibilities in order to build capacity across the school. However, too much time is spent by the interim headteacher on management tasks which is reducing her impact across the school. A role description is now in place for the deputy headteacher with weekly meetings scheduled to provide a more coordinated approach to improvement. The deputy headteacher with support from the SIP has strengthened the tracking systems and ensured that all staff have access to target and progress data. This is leading to greater accountability through teacher review meetings. Staff meetings have been used well to focus on training which have contributed to improved confidence and skills, such as assessment of writing. Although this process is ongoing the team are now better able to draw on aspects of good practice across the school.

Subject leader roles are developing. The leaders of English, mathematics and science are enthusiastic about their role and have carried out a limited range of monitoring activities supported by LA consultants. Through a range of monitoring activities in conjunction with the SIP the school's leaders have an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses. A calendar of monitoring and evaluation events is now in place to secure a systematic and coordinated approach.

School leaders have established a training programme for teaching assistants to enable them to work with teachers and pupils more effectively. However, given the levels of underachievement across the school there is a need to speed up this process to enable teaching assistants to work proactively with targeted individuals

and small groups on intervention work. Time has been designated weekly for teachers and teaching assistants to plan lessons together but more direction is needed to make full use of the time available in lessons.

The governing body is now well informed about provision and progress; governors make monitoring visits, and are in a position to make informed decisions. The school has worked hard to strengthen its provision and is aware that there is not yet sufficient impact on pupil achievement. The interim headteacher is aware that this is a pressing priority. Inadequate teaching is a significant barrier to the school's recovery and further development.

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

- Ensure that all those in leadership and management positions monitor their work rigorously, take urgent action to address shortcomings and evaluate the impact of their actions – satisfactory

External support

The LA has facilitated stability for the school in confirming interim headteacher arrangements during the period of special measures. Good assistance has been provided by the SIP to strengthen the use of data and to support and validate school leader judgements on a range of monitoring and evaluation activities. Input from LA consultants has improved skills and confidence in writing, numeracy and science. An audit of teaching assistant skills has established a base line for training. Input has been less successful in eliminating inadequate teaching. The link arranged with a partner primary school has been less effective as it does not share the same challenges as a small school. The LA is now seeking an appropriate link to support leadership, teaching, curriculum and teaching assistant developments.

Priorities for further improvement

- Accelerate the training of teaching assistants to enable them to contribute more effectively to pupils' learning.
- Link the analysis of tracking information to classroom planning to ensure that learning gaps and relative weaknesses are addressed.
- Focus teaching more sharply on what pupils with different abilities need to learn to eradicate unsatisfactory teaching.
- Extend target setting and tracking to reading.