

25 January 2008

The Headteacher
Netherfield Primary School
Chandos Street
Netherfield
Nottinghamshire
NG4 2LR

Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NETHERFIELD
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Keith Edwards and Helen Ranger (Additional Inspectors) to your school on 23 and 24 January 2008, 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 January 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Nottinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

David Martin
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF NETHERFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 23 and 24 January 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the headteacher, senior leadership team, subject coordinators, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last visit the deputy headteacher has retired, although she still works one day a week in order to hand over responsibility for assessment and data. The position has been filled on an acting basis for the rest of this academic year by the internal promotion of a member of the extended leadership team.

Achievement and standards

The school has continued to collect and analyse detailed information about all children's starting points. This now acts as an effective baseline by which to measure individual progress. The most recent summary of achievement in the Foundation Stage demonstrates that children make good progress in all areas of learning. Because their starting points are so low, they do not quite reach the LA average standard by the end of the Foundation Stage.

In the lessons seen during this visit, pupils made progress that was at least satisfactory and often good. Considerable progress has been made in continuing to set up procedures for assessing and tracking the longer-term progress of individuals, classes and year groups. 'Attainment maps' for each class give a clear picture of how pupils are doing in tests and in teachers' assessments. A new tracking system is being established in reading, writing and mathematics which efficiently analyses how quickly pupils are moving towards their academic targets. The system means that teachers have a better knowledge of pupils' progress and they are using this to support their lesson planning. They are much more aware of any pupil at risk of underachieving so that they can take remedial action quickly. The tracking system is also beginning to give staff an indication of how far any extra support given to pupils is being effective. The records of progress since September 2007 show that most pupils are currently making at least satisfactory progress in English. In mathematics, progress is satisfactory overall and has quite often been good. There is currently less detailed awareness of the progress being made by the more capable pupils.

Attainment remains lower than it should be in English and mathematics. In general, girls still do better than boys, especially in writing. The science standards of the oldest pupils are below average. At present, the leadership team is unable to show how well pupils across the school are achieving in science this year. This is because systematic assessment of progress is scheduled to take place at two main points each year. The first of these takes place next week. This has not addressed the issue

of underachievement urgently enough. There has not been a clear enough focus among senior leaders on how the school can demonstrate that it is raising standards in science.

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

- Raise achievement in English, mathematics and science by using assessment information to ensure that learning builds on previous knowledge and skills – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour is good at all times in classrooms and around the school. Pupils report that there is some boisterous behaviour at times in the playground, but that incidents are dealt with calmly and quickly by staff. Pupils, through the School Council, are being encouraged to help to find solutions to such issues themselves and to take responsibility for their own and other pupils' behaviour. They continue to enjoy school and appreciate the new building and facilities available to them. They show a strong sense of enjoyment in lessons. Children feel safe and well cared for and report that there is always an adult that they can turn to for help. They demonstrate a good understanding of the need to eat healthily, take exercise and to look after themselves and others. The school plays a leading role in health awareness issues within the Netherfield community. Attendance is around average and the school and education welfare officer are working hard with families to reduce absences still further. There have been no exclusions of any kind in the last two terms. Improvements to the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), together with improved test results in 2007 indicates that more pupils are developing the necessary basic skills essential for the next stages in learning and in their adult lives.

Quality of provision

There continues to be satisfactory improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last monitoring visit. The headteacher has clearly and accurately identified those areas where effective teaching takes place and has encouraged teachers to plan together within year groups to ensure that staff expertise and the use of resources are maximised. This process has fostered greater consistency between classes within the same year group, but there remains scope for sharper evaluations of lessons to bring about further refinement and more effective teaching and learning.

There has been satisfactory progress in developing staff confidence and expertise in specific subject areas. For example, staff training and individual support programmes have met concerns about staff subject knowledge in science and ICT. This is particularly evident in the increased confidence in teachers' use of interactive whiteboards to make lessons more interesting and to support learning. Throughout the school, there is strength in the teamwork between the class teacher and the support staff to help the children learn. This is particularly evident in the classes for the younger children where the adult support is programmed very effectively to

support individual children and small groups particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons. A purposeful atmosphere pervades each class, with teachers conscious of the need to ensure that lessons are conducted at a brisk pace to maintain the interest of pupils and to ensure there is adequate time to evaluate what the pupils have learned by the end of each lesson. In the more effective lessons, teachers frequently remind the pupils of the key objectives to ensure that they are not sidetracked.

Throughout the school, teachers maintain good levels of discipline based on strong relationships. Pupils feel valued and appreciate the level of security in school. They value the feedback on their progress and increasingly enjoy their learning. The pupils with learning difficulties are enabled to make satisfactory progress because the work set is carefully matched to their abilities and adult support is well targeted. However, in many lessons the needs of the higher attaining pupils are not met sufficiently because the work set lacks challenge and fails to stretch their potential.

The school has engaged in a radical overhaul of its curriculum in line with the spirit of recent national guidelines. It is particularly evident in the Foundation Stage and in Year 1, where there is much greater emphasis on strengthening the links between subjects and making learning more relevant. This 'Creative Journey' approach combined with effective teaching has motivated the pupils and enabled the younger children to make good progress. There are plans to extend the approach into the whole school for the start of the next academic year. However, the school recognises that a full evaluation of the process is required to ensure lessons have been learned from the early stages of implementation.

The quality of care and support remains very good. All adults know the children well and attend well to their personal and social needs. Pupils are taught to take care of themselves through personal, social and health education (PSHE), including work on Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), which is now all coordinated by the assistant headteacher. This has now been extended through Key Stage 1 as well as in the older year groups. During the inspection, the pupils enjoyed a visit from a paralympic athlete who talked to them about perseverance, challenges and barriers to success.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by: providing more challenge, improving teachers' knowledge of science and by enabling pupils to reach their short term targets - satisfactory
- Provide a curriculum that meets pupils' needs and interests, particularly in Key Stage 1 - satisfactory

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school shows a very mixed picture, with some aspects that are developing well and some that are weak. On balance, as the

school is improving the team judge that leadership and management are satisfactory overall.

The weaknesses lie in strategic planning. A priority for further improvement at the last visit was to create a medium-term strategic plan that draws together key priorities and creates a timescale for implementation. This has still not been addressed with sufficient speed. The recently re-constituted leadership team has made a very early attempt to create a single strategic plan, but it is weak in several areas. Actions are too general and not specific about what will actually happen. The costs of these actions are not clearly shown. It is not clear who will monitor and evaluate the actions and how and when this monitoring and evaluation will take place. There is no short-, medium- and longer-term nature to the planning. Without this planning the future direction of the school is not clearly communicated to staff, governors and the LA. Nor are the governors, LA officers or inspectors able to hold the school to account for the improvements that are planned. Self-assessment is weak because of the poor links between strategic planning and evaluation.

A second weakness is in the monitoring by senior leaders of pupils' progress in lessons. At the last visit the headteacher was asked to ensure that classroom monitoring focuses more sharply on learning outcomes. This is not evident in records of classroom observation. The inspection team at the next visit will focus even more sharply on the progress that pupils make in class and will expect that the monitoring of practice undertaken by senior leaders and the LA has a similarly sharp focus.

The school has reviewed the whole-school roles of the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher in leading priorities for whole school development and in supporting and coaching middle leaders. This is at an early stage of implementation, but subject leaders are already noticing the improvement in line management support. However, there is a lack of balance of responsibilities, particularly in the case of the acting deputy headteacher, who has a number of substantial roles. The LA intends to conduct an audit of leadership and management that may help to resolve such imbalances.

Middle leaders continue to flourish in leading, supporting and monitoring classroom practice in their subject areas. This is having a very positive impact on improvements seen in classroom practice. The progress in the use of ICT by teaching staff is a good example of recent improvement following planned training and support. The school is now able to rely less on external support and sustain improvement from within existing staffing. The school has a good grasp of strengths and weaknesses in provision and is successfully taking steps to improve teaching still further.

At present the governors are not rigorously checking that priorities for further improvement in the monitoring letters are being acted upon with sufficient speed.

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

- Strengthen leadership and management by more effective delegation of responsibilities and rigorous monitoring evaluation of teaching, learning and pupils' progress – satisfactory

External support

The LA continues to provide good support through the 'Intensifying Support Programme'. The school is now starting to take more responsibility for sustaining improvements in teaching and learning. There is now a need for joint observations with senior staff to focus more keenly on the progress of pupils and to reflect these in observation records.

The School Improvement Adviser provides a good level of support and challenge. The LA plans to conduct a leadership audit in order to support the development and focus of the newly re-constituted leadership team.

Priorities for further improvement

Not addressed from the last visit:

- Ensure that classroom monitoring focuses more sharply on learning outcomes.
- Create a medium term strategic plan that draws together key priorities and creates a timescale for implementation.

Additional priorities:

- Show how the school's tracking demonstrates that pupils' progress is improving and standards are rising in Science.
- Ensure that classroom planning gives appropriate attention to the needs of more able pupils.