

13 March 2008

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 PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Krishan Sharma and Cheryl Thompson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 11 and 12 March 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 – inadequate.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed without consulting 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 the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF FAIRSTEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 11 and 12 March 2008

Evidence

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

Context

Since the previous visit a newly qualified teacher has joined the school on a temporary basis and a new Key Stage 2 manager took up her permanent post in January 2008. A new teacher has been appointed to lead and manage the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 with effect from April 2008 and an existing teacher has taken responsibility for science. An Interim Executive Board has been established.

Achievement and standards

Significant improvements have been made in the Foundation Stage because teaching is now strongly focused on raising children's achievement in all areas of their learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2, results in optional tests administered in January 2008 in Years 2 and 6 show improved attainment in English and mathematics. The school anticipates that it will meet its targets for seven and eleven year-olds in national tests this summer but a scrutiny of pupils' written work by inspectors indicates that not all pupils in Years 2 and Year 6 are on-track to meet national expectations. The school has planned a substantial programme of support to boost the achievement of those pupils in Year 6 who are performing close to the national expectations for their age. Information on how well pupils are achieving in science remains under-developed. Lesson observations by inspectors confirmed that most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Progress is more noticeable in Years 5 and 6 where the quality of teaching and learning has improved. It is less pronounced in Years 3 and 4 due to some ineffective teaching which has now been resolved, and a lack of continuity in learning caused by recent staffing changes. Pupils handle their number work with greater confidence but improving pupils' writing across all areas of the curriculum remains a priority for the school.

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 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour is now good. They demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons, show respect for each other and work well together. Pupils told inspectors that they feel happy and safe in school and that the occasional instances of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively. The school council is making a growing contribution to school life. The school continues to work hard to monitor pupil absence but significant bouts of winter illnesses have affected the attendance of a large proportion of pupils. This and the regular absence of a small minority of pupils have led to a decline in attendance to below the national average.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved and is now satisfactory. The only good lesson observed was in the Foundation Stage and the lack of good lessons elsewhere, restricts the school's ability to accelerate the progress that pupils make. All teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, build good relationships with pupils and share their high expectations of them. Pupils have greater confidence in their teachers and say that 'they're friendlier' and that 'they deal with behaviour better'. Most teachers are demonstrating greater confidence in their use of information and communication technology but inspectors saw few opportunities for pupils to use computers. Assessment information is not used to accurately pinpoint the gaps in pupils' learning so some lesson activities are not suitably matched to meet the specific needs of all learners. The school has an ample number of teaching assistants, but not all of them are deployed effectively to support pupils that are under-achieving. Pupils are becoming more familiar with whole-class targets set to help them improve but they say that teachers do not always make it clear how these targets contribute to their overall improvement.

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.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher continue to provide clear leadership. The acting headteacher has managed decisively to eradicate inadequate teaching in Year 3 and for the first time since the inspection in January 2007, the school has a full complement of qualified, full-time teachers. Staff morale remains high. Cleaner, brighter classrooms with good displays of pupils' work present a much better environment in which to learn. The senior leadership team has been extended to include subject leaders for numeracy and science, and a manager of Key Stage 2, all of whom are responding positively to the additional responsibility bestowed on them. However, these arrangements are quite new and the capacity of the extended management team to bring about improvement remains unproven at this stage. A new teacher has assumed responsibility for science and is already beginning to seek improvements in the subject. A new system to track pupil progress across all

subjects is being introduced but this is not yet fully operational. Lesson monitoring is largely carried out by the headteacher, supported by the literacy coordinator.

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 local authority continues to provide effective support for the headteacher. It acknowledges that staffing issues have delayed some of the improvements planned and is firmly committed to maintaining the challenge and support needed to remove the school from special measures by the end of this year. A school improvement teacher responsible for the Foundation Stage will remain in post during the summer term to induct a newly appointed, permanent Key Stage 1 manager. An Interim Executive Board is overseeing the strategic development of the school including the appointment of a new permanent headteacher and governing body later this year. It is monitoring the progress made by the school but some confusion exists because three different improvement plans are currently in place.

Priorities for further improvement

- Engage all staff in identifying what good teaching and learning is, and use this information to increase the amount of good lessons across both key stages
- Ensure that all new managers are involved in regular monitoring of lessons and that all observations are firmly focused on what pupils are learning
- Firmly embed the new system to track pupil achievement so that teachers and managers can accurately pinpoint the progress that all individuals are making.