

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



21 December 2007

Mrs A Birchall
Saltfleetby CE Primary School
Main Road
Saltfleetby
Louth
Lincolnshire
LN11 7SN

Dear Mrs Birchall

Ofsted survey inspection programme – schools formerly in special measures now judged to be good or better

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and governors, during my visit on 03 December to look at work done to improve the school's overall effectiveness since it was placed in special measures in July 2002

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit focused on the successful actions taken by the school to build capacity and significantly improve provision, particularly in relation to: the impact of external support; the involvement of pupils and parents in school improvement; issues around staffing and leadership and management.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform the outcomes of the visit included interviews with the headteacher, discussions with staff, a group of pupils, the local authority link advisor, representatives from the governing body and two parents. Relevant documentation was scrutinised.

The previous headteacher, who was also the Key Stage 2 class teacher, left the school after it was placed in special measures. The prompt secondment of an experienced and effective headteacher by the local authority meant that a number of key issues identified in both leadership and management and the quality of teaching began to improve immediately. The local authority continued to provide good and sufficient help and support throughout the process of school improvement, proportionately reducing it as the school securely established its own effective procedures for self review and development.

The governing body was reduced by resignations after the special measures judgement to three members, some of whom were relatively new appointments. The local authority drafted in two experienced serving headteachers to the governing body who supported it in developing awareness of systems and duties of the governing body. However, members already were personally highly committed to the school and had a wide range of skills which have been extremely important in supporting the school through to its current success. The current Chair in particular is highly involved in the school, both formally and informally, provides a great deal of support, and is instrumental in generating creative ideas to further develop and enhance the school's provision. The governing body's credibility with the local community has also been important in strengthening links between parents and the school. It now has a full complement of governors and is good.

The appointment in January 2003 of a substantive headteacher who is outstanding as a leader and as a classroom teacher further moved the school forward. She managed the process of change extremely skilfully, ensuring that the pace of improvement and stability were maintained and established good relationships with the community. She also established clear expectations and a commitment from all staff to the process of improvement. About a year after the school was placed in special measures, a number of staff left the school, and there was a need for some restructuring. By the end of this short but somewhat unsettled period, the headteacher had appointed two new and effective class teachers and established a positive atmosphere in school through productive working relationships between teachers and support staff.

By the time of the first monitoring visit after the school had been placed in special measures, the quality of teaching had improved from unsatisfactory overall to satisfactory. Thereafter teaching continued to improve steadily and rapidly. By the time the school came out of special measures it was good, and in a subsequent inspection has been judged to be good with outstanding features. This was because teachers' many existing high quality skills were supported by the improvement of a number of whole school features, including: the development of systems for the tracking of pupil progress, target setting, planning, and monitoring of the quality of teaching; the immediate rationalisation of the curriculum to provide sufficient subject time and good schemes of work; and the further development of a curriculum which now includes a wide range of enrichment activities. These factors, together with appropriate training well matched to need, made teaching which was already good even better.

The curriculum in particular has improved dramatically since the school was placed in special measures. Staff and governors have worked hard to provide a very wide range of additional clubs and activities, and the use of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' experience is outstanding. This contributes

significantly to the very happy and purposeful atmosphere in the school and to pupils' good attitudes to learning.

Staff, governors, parents and pupils interviewed during the visit all said at some point: 'The school is like a family'. The growth of this very distinctive and characteristic atmosphere in the school is a direct result of the care and commitment given to the school by all those concerned. It is a strong contrast to the atmosphere described in the report which placed the school in special measures, and is one of the most significant improvements in the school. A related factor in the school's rapid and sustained improvement is the extent to which voluntary helpers are involved in the school. There are many striking examples of improvements to the school's environment or extra curricular provision made by unpaid but highly committed people.

The headteacher herself is enormously committed to the school and has worked extremely long hours to ensure the school's continuing improvement and establish it securely at the heart of the community. As well as highly effective work on the key areas of leadership and management within the school, she attends many events, even if privately organised, to reinforce the sense of community so important to the school. As a result this commitment from the headteacher, staff and governors, the community, once negative and disengaged from the school, is now actively involved.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop in the school.

A copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector