

22 July 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
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Alan Lemon and Jill Bavin, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 8 and 9 July 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth 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 without reference to HMI.

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 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 fourth monitoring inspection: 8 and 9 July 2008.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, the senior leadership team, literacy, numeracy and science coordinators, the chair of the interim executive board, a group of pupils and 2 representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous visit a new senior manager has taken up her post as leader of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The school has reduced the number of teacher assistants. The interim executive board are at an advanced stage of considering future governance arrangements for the school.

Achievement and standards

The school has built on the improvements noted during the previous inspection and can now present growing evidence that the majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress. In the Foundation Stage, pupils continue to make good progress in all the areas of learning and the majority are prepared well for Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments made at end of Year 2 this year show that standards remain well below average, but have risen in reading, writing and mathematics as a result of improved teaching and monitoring of progress. In Key Stage 2, the school's own provisional data indicates that standards are well below average. However, pupils' progress is now systematically monitored and most pupils have made satisfactory progress and met the targets set for them in English and mathematics. Lesson observations by inspectors confirmed that pupils make satisfactory progress and, in an increasing proportion of lessons, good progress. Pupils continue to make more progress in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 3 and 4. The Headteacher has taken decisive action to resolve this by deploying some of her most effective teachers into these classes. Teachers' greater confidence in using assessment data to monitor progress and identify gaps in pupils' learning is leading to improvements. These procedures have not been in place long enough to gauge pupils' progress throughout their time in school and have not yet been extended into science.

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' good behaviour has been maintained. Pupils' play is active and healthily boisterous in the playground but overall, the school is an orderly community. Pupils are friendly with and supportive of each other. Pupils told inspectors that there is no

bullying anymore, 'just splurges of silliness'. Pupils are enjoying school more because work is more often matched to their needs and there are, according to one boy, 'thousands more rewards'. Attendance rates have improved and punctuality is improving as a result of more rigorous monitoring by senior managers. Although still below the national average pupils' attendance compares well with schools in similar circumstances.

Quality of provision

Senior managers have successfully ensured that the quality of teaching and learning has continued to improve. Inspectors found that in more than half of the lessons observed, good teaching accelerates pupils' progress and allows them to catch up on previous gaps in their learning. Teachers consistently explain the context of the lesson so pupils know what to do. Planning routinely takes account of pupils' prior learning, so work is better matched to the needs of different groups. Teachers and other adults manage pupils' behaviour well, so interruptions to learning are much reduced. Teaching assistants are better briefed and support pupils effectively, especially those pupils who find learning difficult. However, lesson plans do not always specify what their role is or the tasks they are expected to do, which limits their effectiveness in some lessons. An increasing number of teachers involve pupils in assessing their own learning and encourage them to gauge how well they are doing against the targets set for them. They ask pupils to evaluate the common features of successful work and during questioning, encourage them to share ideas before answering. This is helping to build pupils' confidence and promote their independence. The standard of presentation of pupils' work is not high enough because not all teachers make it clear what the expectations are or reinforce good habits. Teachers are making good use of interactive white boards to stimulate pupil interest but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use computers.

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 – good.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher continues to drive school improvement and provides the school with a clear educational direction. She ensures that everyone else in the school is committed to resolving the issues raised in the previous inspection and staff morale remains buoyant. The senior leadership team has been strengthened significantly and is now much better placed to fully address the priorities facing the school. They work effectively and enthusiastically as a team and share a corporate determination to improve the quality of education provided. All senior managers have undertaken structured lesson observations to help others improve their teaching and help to identify what constitutes an effective lesson. Assessment procedures are now firmly established in literacy and numeracy but not in science. A newly appointed coordinator has implemented a plan of action to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise overall achievement in science. Senior managers have begun to seek the views of parents in order to engage them in the life of the school.

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 – satisfactory.

External support

The school is benefiting from a range of curriculum support coordinated by the local authority. Senior advisers meet regularly with the headteacher to provide the support she needs and has revised its plans in order to remove the school from special measures by the end of this year. Minutes of these meetings are not shared with inspectors. They have helped the school to make accurate assessments of pupil progress in Key Stage 1 but have had less involvement in validating the school's own view of the quality of teaching and learning. An interim executive board continues to oversee the school's strategic development and coordinate improvements to the site. The headteacher provides the board with regular progress reports but these are not thoroughly evaluated to gauge whether or not all aspects of the key issues raised in the previous inspection are being progressed at a suitable rate.

Priorities for further improvement

- Embed and extend assessment procedures to ensure that teachers have a thorough understanding of how well pupils are achieving in science
- Continue to monitor the effectiveness of lessons so that teachers' expectations remain consistently high and good practice is extended across all classes
- Ensure that pupils make greater use of computers in lessons.