

21 May 2008

Mr Simon Morley
Acting Headteacher
Swaffham CE VC Junior School
Brandon Road
Swaffham
Norfolk
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Dear Mr Morley

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SWAFFHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 19 – 20 May 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 March 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 be appointed subject to the following qualifications:

- an effective senior teacher acts as mentor and schedules weekly meetings
- a comprehensive induction programme is prepared
- the monitoring lead inspector moderates the support and induction of the appointment during visits.

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 Norfolk.

Yours sincerely



John Francis

Additional Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF SWAFFHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 19 – 20 May 2008

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, senior leaders, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The school continues to be led by a specialist county headteacher. The new headteacher's transfer to the school was postponed until September 2007 to minimise the disruption to both schools at that stage of the academic year. With the departure of a member of staff, a new subject leader for mathematics has just been appointed.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' progress overall remains satisfactory and much as it was at the time of the last monitoring inspection. The school's own assessments indicate an improved rate of progress in reading and writing but continuing inadequate progress in mathematics. Pupils lack the rapid recall of tables and number bonds that would make their work more accurate and efficient. However, the school is likely to remain below the national averages for English and mathematics and below the minimum standards expected by the LA this year. Nevertheless, the work in pupils' books shows steady improvement since the last visit, although there remain weaknesses in aspects of pupils' spelling and punctuation. Improvements to presentation and writing enable pupils to work more effectively. This is reflected in the quality and quantity of their work – particularly in their writing tasks. A greater focus on drawing accurately in mathematics is also leading to improvements, particularly in the quality of pupils' graph work.

Personal development and well-being

The continuing improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes are a real success across the school. Pupils are positive that, while there are still some pupils who find it difficult to meet the higher expectations, there are now very few incidences of disruption to their learning. This is one of the key factors that has brought about the initial improvements in pupils' progress in subjects. Pupils' attitudes are much more positive and, for the most part, lessons flow smoothly. Along with the more consistent management of behaviour, improvements to teachers' planning allow pupils a much higher level of engagement in their tasks. Facilities such as the 'pastoral bay' are now used much more in line with the original idea, rather than merely as a place to put disruptive pupils. Teachers are much better at dealing with classroom issues themselves. Pupils would like to see the 'pastoral bay' idea extended to the outdoors so that they have somewhere they can go, have their own space and possibly have someone with whom they can talk. They see this as a possible role for older pupils. An important factor in the improvement to pupils'

attitudes and responses is the developing work in the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL). Pupils are beginning to identify with this approach and are becoming much more self-directing.

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

- ensure that behaviour is consistently and effectively managed so that no lessons are disrupted – *good*.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning continue to improve steadily with the greater emphasis on more focused planning, improved class management and higher expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. However, there is still not enough consistently good teaching that will significantly improve the rate of pupils' progress and raise standards to the necessary level. Lesson evaluations by the senior leadership team are much sharper and monitoring by the subject leaders in English and science are having a positive impact on improving teachers' skills and confidence.

Lesson planning is now much better matched to the range of pupils' needs. The developing use of targets is proving effective in guiding pupils to the next steps in their learning. The use of clearer measures of success within these targets gives pupils and teachers a clearer understanding of what is expected from each lesson and how this will be evaluated. Marking is much improved, although there is still some variation. Nevertheless, children have better information about what they do well and where they need to improve. Pupils are very positive about this. However, in some classes, not enough thought is given to how these weaknesses will be followed up in subsequent lessons.

During this visit, there were many times when teachers gave pupils' opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. The use of 'response partners' was a common and helpful approach in all classes. Giving pupils time to reflect and respond to teachers' questions has improved the quality of their answers and their confidence to respond in greater detail. An additional effect has been to improve pupils' listening skills; they are now more able to pick up on the detail of questions and comments. While improving, this approach is still not always used to best effect in other parts of lessons, such as during the summaries towards the end of them. For example, pupils do not always have the opportunity to evaluate the work of others and back up their comments and assertions with examples from either the text or spoken word.

The recording of information about pupils' attainment and progress is now much more frequent, using a computer based system. The assessment timetable is a valuable tool in providing regular updates for the senior leadership and subject leaders. There remains work to be done in developing all aspects of this to include analyses of different groups of pupils in classes, year groups or across the school. However, the school now has much more reliable information on which to base its planning decisions.

As well as developments in reading, writing and science, there is much good work to be seen around the school in personal, social and health education (PSHE) through

the SEAL work and in creative subjects, especially the good quality art displays. With the imminent changes to the school's organisation, much work will be needed to realign the curriculum to cater for the mixed-age classes from September to ensure that the full curriculum is taught and prevent repetition over time. This work is urgent if it is to be securely in place ready for the start of the new academic year.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to accelerate progress and raise standards in English, mathematics and science - *satisfactory*
- raise the expectations that teachers have or the standards that pupils can attain – *good*.

Leadership and management

The school continues to be well led and guided by the acting headteacher. His clear assessment of needs and measured response has enabled the school to maintain its rate of progress, and indeed, improve this in some aspects of its work. He is being well supported by the senior leadership team, recently strengthened by the addition of a new subject leader for mathematics. Teachers now show greater confidence in their own abilities, something demonstrated by the good work being done by the subject leaders for English and science. The new subject leader for mathematics will have much to do in identifying what is needed to bring the subject up to an acceptable standard. A thorough review of English, mathematics and science now needs to establish clearly how much progress has been made and what remains to be done.

Systematic monitoring by the school's leaders is giving greater consistency of approach to teaching, planning, behaviour management and expectations. The areas for further development from the last monitoring inspection have been dealt with successfully. The pupil assessment timetable is now in place and regular opportunities for moderation of pupils' work are improving teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum, leading to more accurate assessments.

Governors continue to develop their roles and expertise with good guidance from the chair of governors and support from the LA. They are increasingly effective in their role of holding the school to account and knowing what is going on in school. However, with a number of relatively inexperienced governors, this remains work in progress.

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

- Develop effective systems for planning, monitoring and evaluating improvements in the school – *satisfactory*

External support

The LA continues to provide the school with good support, both practically and financially. Along with the work of the school's development advisor, the work of consultants and other external support is having a positive impact on the school's development and progress. The LA is already planning how it can support the school through the further changes taking place for September.

Priorities for further improvement

- Devise a clear and detailed plan of action for mathematics based on a thorough evaluation of all aspects of the subject.
- Review the progress of the other core subjects for the end of the academic year and use this information to produce action plans for the forthcoming year.
- Further enhance the personal development of the older pupils through giving them a greater role in mentoring, supporting and guiding other pupils.
- Begin to plan the reorganisation of the curriculum to reflect the changes to the class structures from September.