

13 June 2008

Mr Mark Scotton, Headteacher
Pinxton Kirkstead Junior School
Kirkstead Road
Pinxton
Nottinghamshire
NG16 6NA

Dear Mr Scotton

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PINXTON KIRKSTEAD SCHOOL

Following my visit with Additional Inspectors Ian Nelson and Rosemary Eaton to your school on 4 and 5 June 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – *good*

Progress since being subject to special measures – *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 Education for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF PINXTON KIRKSTEAD JUNIOR SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 4 – 5 June 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, governor representatives and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the school went into special measures, a temporary acting headteacher was appointed for the autumn term. A substantive headteacher has now been in post for two terms. Two new permanent assistant heads have been appointed from 1 April 2008. At that time, an additional tier of middle management was also put in place.

Achievement and standards

While the school has a wealth of assessment information suggesting that most pupils are making good progress, this is not supported by the work in pupils' books or by lesson observations which show that progress is satisfactory overall and sometimes good.

The school has had a strong focus on improving writing and the school's records show some improvement. However, the pupils' books indicate that expectations of handwriting and the presentation of work are not high enough and teachers' marking of pupils' work is far too variable. Too much of the work is insufficiently neat and there is too little evidence of teachers demanding improvements from week to week or term to term. Mediocre writing is regularly accepted with little comment, although there is evidence of some teachers giving pupils clear guidance on how to improve and of pupils responding positively to that guidance. Current overall standards at Year 6 are around average, which indicates that these pupils have made up a little of the lost ground from earlier in Key Stage 2 in English and science, but not enough overall.

The school has improved the way it identifies more able pupils and in the best lessons they receive challenging work, though this is not yet consistent throughout the school. Increasingly teachers identify quite clearly a higher target for the most able to attain. Sometimes all pupils are motivated to aim for the higher target too. However, lessons do not give enough opportunities for more able pupils to take responsibility for their own learning or solve problems. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils were not given the opportunity to devise their own investigation, choose their own equipment and evaluate their results. Because the whole class worked through the same investigation at the same time the most able were not sufficiently challenged. On the other hand, an outstanding history lesson

saw Year 3 pupils make particularly good progress in their learning as they identified what they knew about Ancient Egypt, what they would like to know, and how to find the information in preparation for their new topic.

Overall the school has made a great effort to address the issues on achievement from the last inspection and has gone a long way to put in place systems and structures to resolve them. However, the inconsistent application of these systems across the school means that improvement has been uneven and has been satisfactory overall.

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

- Raise standards in English, especially in writing - *satisfactory*
- Eliminate underachievement among higher attaining pupils - *satisfactory*

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour remains good and at times exemplary. There are fewer instances of pupils demonstrating restlessness during lessons. Pupils are often very keen to play an active part in lessons, for example, by volunteering to act out a role on the 'hot seat'. They usually work together well in pairs or small groups and listen carefully when others are answering questions. Their positive attitudes enhance their learning in the great majority of lessons.

Quality of provision

The school's own evaluations of lessons are now more closely focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. One outcome of this work is that teachers now consistently ensure that pupils know what they are intended to learn during each lesson, often reminding them at regular intervals and helping them to check on their own progress against precise criteria. These learning goals are displayed clearly for pupils' reference, but the language used is sometimes too technical for all pupils to understand without help, which limits their usefulness. Lesson planning is now more consistent. Although teachers within each year continue to support each other with planning, the plans always refer to the precise group being taught. In a few instances, teachers make very good use of their evaluations of learning in previous lessons in order to further modify their plans to the specific needs of their group. For example, in a literacy lesson, the planned task was simplified because the teacher had identified that the pupils needed further reinforcement before they could take the next step in learning. Strategies for meeting the needs of the more able pupils are effective in some lessons, but not consistently so. In a small number of outstanding lessons, pupils learn exceptionally well. These instances are characterised by motivating activities and teachers' insistence that the time available is used to the full by keeping pupils focused and working hard throughout. The recently opened, high quality information and communication technology suite is used increasingly effectively to support pupils' learning and enhance their enjoyment.

The number of good or better lessons has improved since the last monitoring visit. There continues to be no inadequate teaching at the school although, through inconsistencies, too many of the lessons are still satisfactory in order to effectively raise all pupils' achievement.

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

- Improve teaching, particularly by making a thorough evaluation of its impact on learning – *satisfactory*

Leadership and management

Since the last monitoring visit, the new headteacher has initiated and helped to develop an effective two-tier management structure. The school creates a positive learning environment for the pupils, who are supported by an enthusiastic and dedicated staff team. Systems of tracking pupils' progress are becoming better embedded in literacy and numeracy. Data collection has begun in science ready for a full analysis in 2009. Staff have a clearer picture of pupils' progress through assessment overall, although this has yet to be accurately matched to lesson observations and the scrutiny of work. The school has set increasingly ambitious targets for each year group based on the data they have begun to collect. Target setting is now becoming embedded in the work of the school. Information is used to identify groups of pupils in need of further support, carefully chosen intervention programmes or a greater level of challenge.

The structure of the governing body has undergone significant change since the last monitoring visit. Governors have initiated new effective ways of monitoring the school whereby individual committees take responsibility for each key issue that requires address. This is working well, increasing their activity in school. Because of the formation of a school improvement committee, the governors are more involved and have a more accurate view of the progress the school is making. They better understand their roles and responsibilities in helping to monitor the school effectively and hold it to account.

The school's vision is clear and this has been collectively and enthusiastically shared between staff, pupils and their parents. The impact of this has been to enable all to understand the school's direction of travel and the expectation for each and every pupil within the school. Parents have shared their commitment too for supporting the school and continuing to support their child's learning at home. Monitoring of teaching and learning is regular, and had enabled the school to identify strengths and weaknesses. It continues to address some of the inconsistencies that still exist across the school. Subject coordinators are at varying stages of leading their areas forward as some of these roles are new and have yet to be embedded. They work in close collaboration with the LA. The school continues to use its improvement plan well to focus on the priorities and to evaluate its progress. It has made satisfactory progress in all of the other three areas for improvement and worked towards this effectively. Initiatives are becoming more embedded, although inconsistencies in their application are still evident. The school rightly recognises that systems have yet to be further sustained for longer term impact on the outcomes for pupils.

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

- Improve leadership and management at all levels ensuring the school is given clear direction and set high expectations in relation to raising standards and achievement – *good*

External support

The quality of the external support committed to the school by the LA has been good; its impact is beginning to be realised in areas identified for improvement. Since the last monitoring visit it has correctly focussed on developing the leadership and management within the school to significant effect. The senior leadership team is secure and the middle management structure is in place. The governing body has been significantly strengthened and it has continued to monitor the school carefully. The LA has made a significant investment in improving information and communication technology facilities at the school, which is significantly enhancing all subjects within the curriculum and better improving pupils' economic wellbeing. LA consultants continue to help the school develop consistent good practices in the classroom to aid improved learning. This is beginning to bear fruit and has contributed to some improvements in teaching, although it is yet not consistent across the school.

The LA has followed its statement of action appropriately and continues to rightly focus its energies on providing a secure management structure and developing the staff and governing body. It has monitored the implementation of the school's action plan well and contributed significantly to monitoring teaching and learning and standards and achievement across the school. The LA's evaluation of the school's progress is accurate and it has also ensured, through self evaluation, that the school has a mostly accurate view of itself. There is a rightful sense of urgency and a joint determination of the local authority, staff and governors to turn the school around. The timescales continue to be rigorous but realistic and have thus been prioritised well.

Priorities for further improvement

Key issues 1 and 2 remain as at the last Section 5 inspection. Key issue 3 and 4 concerning teaching and learning and leadership and management are now reworded to:

- Make better use of the outstanding teaching in school to model best practice and eradicate inconsistencies within teaching quality
- Further develop the leadership and management roles at all levels to ensure that all sources of evidence are used effectively to accurately assess pupils' progress, raise standards and accelerate achievement.