

12 May 2008

Mrs S Ashe
Interim Headteacher
Hartsholme Primary School
Carrington Drive
Lincoln
LN6 0DE

Dear Mrs Ashe

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HARTSHOLME PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Jill Smith and Cheryl Jackson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 29-30 April, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

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 Children's Services for Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF HARTSHOLME PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 29-30 April 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior staff, groups of pupils, a range of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The substantive headteacher has been absent through ill health since November 2007. The local authority appointed an experienced interim headteacher to lead the school in her absence. There have been a number of staff changes since the inspection. An assistant headteacher returned after a period of maternity leave but an advanced skills teacher left at the end of December 2007. One teacher is currently on maternity leave and one is on long term sick leave with both their classes covered by temporary teachers. There are a number of new governors, three of whom were appointed by the local authority.

Achievement and standards

Pupils enter the nursery and reception classes with knowledge, understanding and skills that are well below those expected for children of the same age. In 2007, good teaching and well-planned learning activities helped them to make good overall progress in the Foundation Stage, particularly in their personal development and ability to recognise numbers, sounds and letters.

In the 2007 national tests, standards were well below average by the end of Year 2. Generally, boys did less well than girls in comparison to the national average. Writing and mathematics were weaker than reading. The inspection in November 2007 identified that standards in the school were in decline. In national tests for Year 6 standards were exceptionally low in all three core subjects. Pupils made inadequate progress from their starting points. Again, boys generally did less well than girls. Although some pupils who found learning difficult made slightly better progress, overall their achievement was also inadequate.

Since the last inspection, the school has introduced new systems for assessing and recording the standard of pupils' work in reading, writing and mathematics using the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP). Rigorous use of this information is enabling the school to track the progress made by individual pupils and to provide additional support for those who are underachieving. The headteacher increasingly holds teachers to account for the progress of pupils within their classes. Although it is too early to gauge the full impact of the actions taken, pupils' progress is improving in half of the year groups but remains below expectations in the others.

The overall standard of pupils' work remains well below average when compared to their peers nationally. Standards in writing are especially weak. Significant gaps in many pupils' basic skills, such as number bonds, their ability to spell, punctuate

correctly and scientific knowledge are hindering their progress. The school's assessment information, recorded since November 2007, indicates that the current Year 6 pupils are unlikely to reach the targets set by the school for English and mathematics this summer. However, the progress recorded for the current Year 5 suggests that they are on track to reach targets in English and to be close to the targets agreed for mathematics. This mixed picture confirms that strategies adopted by the school are beginning to have an impact on pupils' progress but that this is not yet consistent enough. Pupils still have considerable gaps in their learning which prevent many from reaching national expectations. This was confirmed in the lessons observed during the visit where pupils' progress was mostly satisfactory but with many struggling when asked to apply their knowledge and skills in their work.

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

- Raise standards and increase rates of pupils' progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6 – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being continue to be satisfactory. Older pupils say that the school is changing and speak highly of the way it has improved in recent months. For example, the interim headteacher has simplified the behaviour policy and introduced a new emphasis on recognising and rewarding the many pupils who are well behaved, as well as reprimanding the few who are not. Teachers provide regular opportunities for work in pairs and small groups and pupils enjoy doing so. Most pupils willingly undertake the work in lessons. However, many are too dependent on adults, frequently seeking reassurance from their teachers or teaching assistants, which slows pupils' progress.

Attendance continues to be satisfactory and there has been a marked drop in the number of requests for term time holidays. The incidence of fixed period exclusions has also fallen sharply and there have been no permanent exclusions.

Quality of provision

There have been clear improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the arrival of the interim head teacher, and inspectors agree with the school's evaluation of teaching and learning. No inadequate teaching was observed on the visit but the large majority of lessons were satisfactory. Teachers now set clear learning objectives for English and mathematics but have yet to extend this as effectively to science. These learning objectives are explained to pupils and they are encouraged to identify criteria to help judge whether they have learned successfully. Teachers increasingly provide pupils with access to a variety of approaches to learning, including effective use of the newly installed interactive white boards. However, too often, pupils are not supported well enough in practising and improving their basic skills. Many pupils now enjoy their education and this is demonstrated by their positive attitudes and their consideration for others.

All pupils have undergone formal assessments in literacy and numeracy. The analysis of assessment data is at an early stage, and assessment methods are not yet used

systematically by all teachers. Many teachers have improved their planning so that work is better matched to pupil's individual needs and differing abilities but this is not yet true in all classes. Despite the recent revision of the school's policy, the quality of marking is variable and teachers' feedback to pupils does not always follow the agreed guidelines. However, pupils increasingly assess their own work and review their progress, ensuring that teachers have a better grasp of what pupils understand and what requires consolidation.

Systems to identify those who find learning difficult are not yet fully in place. Currently, there is a lack of consistency both in the quality of target setting for these pupils and also the way in which the targets are used in the planning of lessons.

In the Foundation Stage, good use is made of the spacious outside play area. Staff work together well and ongoing assessment provides them with a detailed picture of how each child is progressing. Children quickly become familiar with the day-to-day routines, behave well and enjoy their time at school. Teachers and support staff provide a good balance between encouraging children to choose the activities they want to do and providing good care and support.

The school has focused appropriately on literacy and numeracy at present and senior staff plan a full review of the curriculum from the autumn. The local authority has scheduled consultant support for science as the next stage in improving the core subjects.

Teachers provide satisfactory educational guidance and this is starting to raise achievement in half of the classes. The school has introduced rigorous procedures for recording and monitoring pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. While teachers are increasingly setting group targets for improvement, some work is still too easy for higher attaining pupils. A leading teacher has now been identified specifically to meet the needs of pupils who the school identifies as being gifted and/or talented.

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

- Ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good through the effective use of assessment information to match work more precisely to pupils' needs and by involving pupils more in their learning – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The interim headteacher provides clear direction for the school, strongly focused on raising standards. She is well supported by the assistant headteachers. The senior staff have ensured that a thorough and rigorous school improvement plan is in place which details the key areas for action. It has been shared with governors and staff and forms the basis against which the school's progress is measured. In a short time, they have established a sound system for tracking pupils' progress, revised key policies such as those concerning behaviour and marking, and raised the importance of accurate assessment of pupils' work. However, these initiatives are in their early stages, are not yet consistently applied by all staff, and have not had time to make a significant impact on the standards which pupils achieve.

The interim headteacher sets clear expectations for the main subject and Key Stage leaders. There are now regular systems for them to monitor the quality of provision in their areas through scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' work and observation of lessons. The reviews of provision have identified some emerging strengths in teaching but also relevant areas for improvement. Plans for literacy are further advanced than those in numeracy, where the subject leader was only appointed in the spring. Progress in science is slower because of the absence of the subject leader and because local authority support is programmed for the autumn.

The interim headteacher and senior leaders review the information on pupils' progress regularly and identify where it is improving and where there are still concerns. They also have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and the areas that need improvement. They have taken decisive action to improve the quality of provision by reorganising classes and reallocating teachers. The senior team know the school's strengths and weaknesses. Progress against the key issues identified in the last inspection is carefully recorded and reported to governors and the local authority.

The governing body has changed substantially since the inspection with three additional governors appointed by the local authority and a new committee structure. Governors have received training on their role and have a good understanding of their responsibility to hold the school to account. They have taken some difficult decisions since January 2008 to ensure that the school's finances are properly managed. They increasingly visit the school, visit classes and interview pupils and staff. Their findings are collected and reported back to all governors. Although this system is not yet fully established, it provides them with first-hand evidence for the quality of the school's work. The governors have confidence in the interim headteacher's focus on improvement.

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

- Improve the impact of leadership and management through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has provided prompt and effective support to the school at all levels. Senior officers briefed governors thoroughly on their role after the inspection in November and supported them at the subsequent meeting for parents. Additional governors were appointed to strengthen the expertise and experience available to the school. The local authority outlined a comprehensive package of support from their consultants in the core subjects and further advice from specialists, for example in the Foundation Stage. They have assisted subject leaders in reviews of provision, provided training and moderated teachers' assessment of pupils' work. This has increased the confidence of subject leaders and strengthened their contribution.

The local authority appointed the interim headteacher to provide leadership during the absence of the substantive headteacher. Funding was provided to support urgent improvements to teaching resources and necessary refurbishment of some

classrooms. Further support was given to provide security fencing so that the school can use the outdoor play and learning areas more effectively. Staff have undertaken productive visits to schools to observe good practice, for example in the teaching of phonics. Effective practitioners from other schools have also made visits to help evaluate the school's provision. The impact of the local authority's statement of action is satisfactory, providing crucial support to key staff.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that those pupils with key weaknesses in their basic skills receive targeted, good quality teaching to remove these barriers to their learning.
- Implement consistently the key policies on lesson planning, differentiation of work and feedback to pupils.
- Ensure that systems for subject leaders' monitoring of performance and evaluation of progress are regular and rigorous.