

1 May 2008

Mrs T Caputa  
Headteacher  
Oak Tree Primary School  
Jubilee Way North  
Mansfield  
Nottinghamshire  
NG18 3PJ

Dear Mrs Caputa

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF OAK TREE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Lynne Blakelock, Additional Inspector, to your school on 29 and 30 April 2008, 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 December 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 Education for Nottinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF OAK TREE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

## Context

The school staffing has remained stable since the last inspection and has been strengthened by the return of a senior manager after a period of absence.

## Achievement and standards

There have been no external tests since the last inspection. The published information on standards and achievement, therefore, remains unchanged. The 2007 tests showed that standards were below the minimum levels expected of all primary schools at the end of Key Stage 2 and exceptionally low at Key Stage 1. The progress made by pupils from their starting points was very poor and has been so for the last three years.

Work in pupils' books shows that standards remain low in all classes. However, the school's own assessment data shows that standards and achievement, especially in writing and mathematics, are rising in most classes. In Year 6, a significantly higher proportion of pupils is online to attain the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2. Because teaching has improved, progress seen in lessons was no less than satisfactory and occasionally good. However, the proportion of lessons where pupils are making good progress is still too low to counter the legacy of underachievement. Too many pupils continue to lack the basic skills in reading and writing to enable them to make better progress in their learning. The extra support given to pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities helps them to make better progress than their peers.

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

- Raise achievement across Key Stage 1 and 2 so that more pupils are able to reach nationally expected levels by the time they leave school – satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

The school's determination to reduce pupils' absence has improved attendance figures. These remain a little below average overall, but authorised absence has improved and is now at the average for primary schools.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved but too many lessons are only satisfactory. There were no inadequate lessons observed during the visit and a number of lessons were good. This matches the school's evaluation.

A common factor in the improvement is teachers' higher expectations of pupils' work and effort. In the best lessons, expectations are very high, the pace is brisk, pupils have challenging work and all achieve well. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent and prevents pupils from making quicker progress. In a few lessons, teachers' classroom management is not always firm enough and pupils become restless.

All lessons have clear objectives so that pupils understand their purpose. However, neither lesson objectives, nor the success criteria by which lessons are judged, have a sharp enough focus to ensure that pupils are challenged sufficiently. Consequently, some pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Although assessment procedures are improving, the increasing amount of information that teachers have about the levels at which pupils are working is not always used to ensure a close match of tasks to pupils' needs. This leads to some pupils, especially the more able, not always being challenged sufficiently.

Pupils are delighted with their target-setting books and proud of the classroom displays which show the levels at which they are working. Both of these encourage pupils to focus on their specific targets. Presently, however, the link between lesson objectives, pupils' target-setting books and errors made in pupils' work is not always clear and many pupils are confused about their short-term priorities for learning.

The quality of marking has improved since the inspection, because a common marking policy has been adopted. There is some especially helpful marking in literacy which tells pupils exactly how to make further progress. In some classes, books are not marked very often. Although marking has improved in numeracy, it is sometimes cursory and not as informative as it could be.

Teaching assistants provide good guidance in lessons. Where they have a close understanding of the learning needs of the pupils and organise focused, relevant activities, pupils move on well in their learning. In the best practice, teaching assistants are fully involved in lessons, working side by side with the teacher.

Work to move the curriculum forward is continuing. Plans to raise standards and achievement through a thematic approach to learning are set to be implemented at the start of the next academic year. The library base has been moved to a more accessible area and is encouraging pupils to make greater use of books, both as a learning resource and for enjoyment. Personal development of pupils is being promoted by their involvement in running the library.

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

- Ensure teachers make better use of assessment to plan steps in pupils' learning more effectively and thus better support their progress – satisfactory.
- Develop academic guidance so that pupils have a better understanding of how to improve their work – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has successfully refocused the school on raising standards and achievement. Supported well by the deputy headteacher, she has worked tirelessly to lay the foundations for improvement.

Better monitoring has enabled leaders to gain a more accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is helping leaders target support and training where it is most needed. Teachers track the progress made by pupils and set short term targets based on national curriculum levels. The strategic plan is more detailed and the school is moving forward on many issues. Targets for improving standards and achievement form part of the plan, but they are not always sufficiently quantified and reviews of progress are not regular enough. Senior leaders are now more rigorously checking on the success of the initiatives introduced and, consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is rising. All leaders are committed to improving the performance of the school. However, their effectiveness is hindered because not all leadership roles are focused on raising standards, and middle managers are not held sufficiently accountable for pupils' achievement.

The school's system for monitoring pupils' progress has improved but is not developed well enough to allow leaders to track progress as pupils move through the school. Governors are supportive and the chair is well informed through regular attendance at leadership meetings. Training has been undertaken to enable governors to hold the school's leaders to account for the progress of pupils.

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

- Carry out rigorous and thorough checks on the school's performance to bring about school improvement at all levels – satisfactory

### External support

The school's local authority adviser and consultants are providing a satisfactory range of support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and leadership and management. Particularly successful has been the guidance provided through the links with a local successful primary school. Changes to local authority personnel have led to a lack of continuity in school improvement adviser support. The LA action plan was judged to be inadequate in respect of a lack of quantified targets. No amended plan was offered during the inspection but will be available before the start of the next monitoring visit.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Clearly define responsibilities of all those with a leadership role, focusing on raising standards and achievement and ensuring clear lines of accountability
- Refine the systems for tracking of pupils' progress so that leaders are able to monitor progress more effectively as pupils move through the school
- Develop academic guidance by making clear the links between pupils' short term targets, lesson objectives and marking