

6 June 2008

Mr Chris Read,
Headteacher,
Attleborough Junior School,
Besthorpe Road,
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Norfolk
NR17 2NA

Dear Mr Read

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ATTLEBOROUGH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Following my visit with John Paull and Meg Hackney, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 11 and 12 of June, 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 January 2008. 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 without first discussing with HMI

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

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 Norfolk.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath

H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF Attleborough Junior SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 4-5 June 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Headteacher, leaders and managers, teachers, governors, pupils and a representative from the local authority (LA). Many classes were observed, as well as behaviour around the school and during play.

Context

A new temporary seconded assistant headteacher is in post.

Achievement and standards

Much work has been carried out since the inspection to ensure that teaching staff are better informed about pupils' achievement and progress. An effective system for tracking the progress in English, mathematics and science that pupils make is now in place. This has enabled staff to set work and targets that are closer to the needs of individual pupils, so rates of progress are beginning to accelerate. In lessons, more pupils are able to understand and cope with work approaching the levels expected for their ages. However, this improvement is recent, and it is closely linked to the quality of teaching. In those classes where teaching is already good, careful questioning of pupils leads to open discussions that help the more able to make the progress that they should. However, this is not always the case and it is too early to be certain that improvements are sustainable. That said, senior leadership is more accurate and rigorous in its monitoring of teachers' planning and in reviewing that work matches pupils' different learning requirements.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- Improve the rate of pupils' progress and raise standards in English, mathematics and science - satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave well around the school. They move through corridors in an orderly manner and are keen to talk to adults in a polite and pleasant way. The school council is beneficial to the school and its members are active. The use of peer mentors in the playgrounds is effective, particularly for resolving the few disagreements which occur between pupils during playtimes. In class, pupils are generally well behaved and keen to learn. However, pupils are often unsure how to respond to questioning and are sometimes hesitant to make contributions in class even when invited to do so. Most pupils are developing the skills needed for independent study, and work well in peer groups.

Quality of provision

Working with the local authority, the school has implemented many changes and introduced much support which has improved the quality of teaching and learning. There is now much less inadequate teaching and inspectors observed some good teaching, though much is satisfactory. Improvements to lesson planning and assessment procedures have been recently introduced. These are not yet fully embedded to ensure consistent practice and it is therefore too early to be sure that these new procedures will have a sustainable effect on raising standards. Higher level teaching assistants are successfully developing their role through on-going training.

In the good lessons teachers skilfully provide pupils with a variety of well managed and motivating activities which are well matched to different abilities. However, other lessons lack excitement, so that some pupils are bored. When this occurs learning is disrupted, especially when the management of behaviour is poor or inconsistent. In a significant minority of lessons there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. The recent introduction of a system of target setting is helping pupils to be better involved in learning and assessing their own progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- Improve the consistency of teaching and raise teachers' expectations of pupils' performance so that all groups of pupils are well motivated and learn effectively in each class – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

Since just before the last inspection which placed the school into special measures, the then newly appointed Headteacher has recognised the issues facing the school. With the extensive support of the LA, many changes have been made to improve standards. However, many of these are very recent and have yet to become fully established across the school. Consequently it is too soon to be sure that standards are improving as a result. Staff have confidence in the new Headteacher and communications are good.

Management roles, including those of heads of year and subject leaders, have been clarified. As a consequence, these staff are more responsible and accountable for the areas they manage. They have received much internal professional development, as well as support from the LA. Many new policies have been introduced, notably for assessment, the monitoring of progress, and the planning of teaching and learning. Teachers now have the tools to gain a much more accurate view of pupils' levels and progress. The application of policies across the school is beginning to be closely monitored so that improvements are consistent.

The school's new self evaluation is largely accurate. It is realistic and sufficiently self critical so that it can be used as a basis for improvement. Staff have been involved in the self assessment process, and appropriately challenging targets are set at strategic and operational level. Quality assurance systems are developing, however

the monitoring of progress against targets often lacks precision, for example in the ascribing of deadlines or actions for improvement.

Together with the LA, the school has done much to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The lesson observation system is systematic, although the extent to which it is used to identify and share the best practice could usefully be developed further across the school. The observation system does not always pay sufficient attention to learning. Teaching is improving, though a small proportion of inadequate sessions remain.

Governors give effective support and guidance to the school. They have played a pivotal role in the recognition of the issues which the school has faced and have been instrumental in obtaining much of the LA support from which the school now benefits. They bring a good range of skills and experience to their role, and have an active involvement with the school. They have demonstrated an ability and willingness to challenge poor performance.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, and make sure that leaders and managers are effective in evaluating the work of the school and ensuring that policies are implemented consistently - satisfactory progress

External support

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory and meets requirements. Since before the last inspection, the LA has committed considerable additional resources to improve the school. It has placed a temporary seconded assistant Headteacher in post and has implemented an Intensifying Support Programme. The school is benefiting from an extensive range of consultant and adviser support.

Priorities for further improvement

Inspectors have not identified any further areas for improvement. However, within the areas identified in the last inspection, the further development of teaching and learning and an improvement in the proportion of good or better teaching should have primacy.