

Cambridge
Education
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01223 578500
Direct F 01223 578501
risp.inspections@camb-ed.com



28 November 2008

The Interim Headteacher
Tolleshunt D'Arcy St Nicholas C.of E. VA Primary School.
Tollesbury Road
Tolleshunt d'Arcy
Maldon
Essex
CM9 8UB

Dear Mrs Fuller

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 21 November, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am grateful to Mrs Sophie Massey, the headteacher designate, who joined me for the day as a 'shadow inspector'.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 13 March 2008, the school was asked to: raise standards in Key Stage 2 and ensure all pupils make at least satisfactory progress; improve teaching and learning; strengthen governance, leadership and management; and improve both attendance and punctuality.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

As a result of the small numbers of pupils in each year group, comparisons with national data should be treated with caution. The inspection of 13 March noted that standards of attainment and pupil progress in Key Stage 2 were a concern. The outcomes of the 2008 Key Stage 2 national tests clarified the nature of the issue. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in English was well below the national average and weaknesses in the pupils' writing skills were evident. Similarly, the provisional results in mathematics were below the national floor targets and well below the target the school had set. However, the provisional results in science were notably stronger and close to the levels expected nationally. In this context the relationship with the pupils' reading skills which are close to the local authority (LA) average was significant. Overall, these pupils made inadequate

progress in English and mathematics but satisfactory progress in science during Key Stage 2.

In October the LA reviewed the progress of the pupils currently in Key Stage 2. Concern was expressed about the progress of children in Years 5 and 6; however, the report commented on the much stronger position in Year 4 where the LA noted the proportion of pupils making 2 levels of progress was a positive feature. The analysis of the Year 3 was equally positive in English but more variable in mathematics and science. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) conducted a review of current data available from the school's recently introduced 'Target Tracker' system. There is evidence that since the beginning of the academic year most pupils in Years 5 and 6 have begun to make appropriate progress.

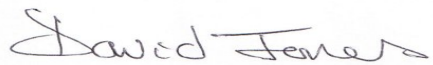
HMI visited each class; teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in all five lessons and good on three of these occasions. In the most effective lessons the teachers' clear, well-paced delivery and the good use of questions helped to maintain the pupils' engagement. In an effective mathematics lessons, pupils quickly grasped the basics of grid multiplication and could explain their methodology. In a number of lessons the pupils could have made better progress if; the teachers' introductory comments had been delivered more clearly, support assistants had been deployed more effectively, or the occasional pupil indiscretion had been dealt with promptly.

The LA deployment of a part-time interim headteacher has required two assistant headteachers to take up additional responsibilities. These colleagues were invited to accompany HMI in the joint observation of teaching. A detailed analysis of learning was developed during a round-table discussion with these colleagues and the interim headteacher. This highlighted areas where effective teaching was improving learning but also where tasks were not well matched to the pupils' learning needs. The views expressed by staff in these sessions concurred with the judgements given by HMI.

The interim headteacher has done well to involve all staff and, notably, the two assistant headteachers in the improvements secured in behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching. Attendance has improved significantly and is above the average for primary schools nationally. The governing body advertised the substantive post of headteacher following the departure of the previous incumbent. Mrs Massey takes up her post in January 2009. The chair of governors has a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas requiring further development. HMI reminded the chair of governors, senior managers and the LA that the school's ability to demonstrate satisfactory pupil progress will be critical to the outcome of the 2009 reinspection.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Jones".

Her Majesty's Inspector