

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



23 January 2009

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 Kathleen Yates and Krishan Sharma, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 14-15 January, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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*

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – *satisfactory*

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 third monitoring inspection on 14-15 January

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last monitoring visit a new headteacher has been appointed and takes up post in April. The interim headteacher continues to lead the school this term, supported by a seconded deputy headteacher provided by the local authority and an assistant headteacher. One teacher remains on long term sick leave and another teacher has been on sick leave since November 2008. This has required some reorganisation of classes and reallocation of teachers to classes. Some staff have also taken on additional responsibilities in this period. Many of these arrangements were at an early stage at the time of the visit.

Achievement and standards

The school's most recent analysis of pupils' progress shows that an increasing number are working at or close to the national expectations for their ages, although the improvement is uneven across the school and subjects, particularly in writing. The assessment data indicate that a majority of pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. However, as yet, too few pupils make the progress necessary for them to compensate for underachievement in previous years. The school's data for pupils in Year 6 shows an improvement over the last year, but from a low base in Year 5. Despite this improvement, standards remain below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The rate of improvement is more marked in early Key Stage 2 classes. In Year 2, standards remain below the national average in reading and writing, but they are closer to the national average in mathematics. As in Key Stage 2, writing remains weaker than other subjects. Those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress against the targets set for them.

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with knowledge, skills and understanding that is below, and sometimes well below, the national expectation for their age. From this starting point achievement is satisfactory, although standards vary from year to year and children do not meet national expectations in all areas of learning by the end of their time in EYFS. Often children arrive with poor language skills. Staff are at an early stage of planning lively and exciting lessons with a high level of interaction and good modelling of language to help develop children's confidence in using new vocabulary.

In the lessons observed, pupils made satisfactory progress overall. However, this progress often slowed when pupils began to work independently because many lacked confidence in basic skills and had gaps in their understanding. Teachers have worked hard over the last two months to implement a system of targets with smaller steps to cater for pupils' specific needs and to promote faster progress. This work is encouraging but has not yet had time to show significant impact in teachers' formal assessment of progress. Speaking and listening often received insufficient attention in lessons. Pupils displayed a lack of confidence and fluency in speaking and often found it difficult to explain what they were doing and what they had learnt.

The tracking of pupils' progress is regularly recorded and analysed. Although the number of pupils making expected or better progress is growing, the number making less than expected progress remains too high. The school has accurately identified specific aspects of literacy and numeracy which require action to improve pupils' achievement and standards. Initiatives, such as focused meetings with each teacher to discuss pupils' progress, particularly of those who are underachieving, have raised the profile of tracking and its use in raising standards.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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 behave well in lessons and around the school. They engage with work and usually try hard, working well with each other. Occasionally, a small number of pupils lose concentration, often when they find the work given to them either too easy or too hard. Staff use the agreed behaviour policy well and pupils understand it and appreciate the way it works. Pupils continue to enjoy their participation in the physical activities offered to them in the playground. The Year 6 prefects take their roles seriously. They enthusiastically assist in a number of small tasks and willingly help younger pupils in the playground. Attendance remains close to the national average. The school's systems are sufficiently robust to identify persistent absentees and lead to work with parents to reduce unauthorised absence further.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved and there was no inadequate teaching observed during this visit. Nevertheless, too many lessons are satisfactory rather than good and the pace of learning is not yet consistently brisk enough to ensure that most pupils reach the expected levels for their age. Relationships are strong in all lessons and there is a positive climate for learning. In the best lessons pupils are provided with activities that are lively, challenge their thinking and accelerate their learning. They are clear about what it is they are to learn. Teachers check pupils' understanding and quickly revisit areas which pupils have found hard to grasp. They manage their classes well and are consistent in their use of the

behaviour policy. Most teaching assistants play a positive role in supporting learning, especially for pupils needing extra help.

In those lessons where learning is less effective, activities do not challenge and engage all pupils, especially those with higher attainment. Teachers often direct the pupils too much and restrict opportunities for them to think for themselves so that their basic skills remain weak and they do not develop independence. While pupils readily work with their learning partners to discuss their ideas, there is insufficient promotion of effective thinking, speaking and writing skills.

Assessment information is now used more effectively to improve lesson planning, leading to a greater focus on learning objectives, which are clearly explained to pupils. The introduction of 'learning journeys', short-term targets for pupils, which are shared with them and their parents, is a key development which is beginning to improve learning. Pupils know what their targets are, what they need to improve and how best to do so. Pupils speak positively about this new arrangement. In the EYFS, staff are suitably skilled at observing how well children are doing but there is less urgency in moving them on to more challenging activities.

Teachers' marking has improved, although inconsistencies remain. The best marking gives clear indications about pupils' achievement and what they need to do to improve their work further. Teachers' comments in lessons also guide and help pupils to improve their work. Pupils have taken enthusiastically to assessing their own work and that of their peers but this is still at an early stage of development.

Key stage leaders and their teams have begun to develop a thematic approach to the curriculum. Increasingly, subjects are linked under broad topics and opportunities taken to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills. There are more regular visits and special events which pupils enjoy. Staff plan to map curriculum provision thoroughly to ensure that there is appropriate progression across the age range and to avoid duplication of activities and content. The school's review of the effectiveness of intervention programmes has led to some pupils receiving more individualised, short-term support to tackle specific gaps in their skills and understanding.

In the EYFS, relationships between adults and children are mostly good and children in all classes settle happily in their surroundings. As a result they enjoy their time in school. Parents take a keen interest in their children's learning and contribute well to homework tasks. Classrooms and the outdoor area are spacious and resources are adequate. The quality of the welfare, health and safety of children is satisfactory. The school is aware that there are some welfare requirements not fully in place and these are already under review.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- 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 continues to provide clear direction for the school and is well supported by the supernumerary deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. The new headteacher takes up post in April. The interim headteacher has a good understanding of the school's developing strengths and areas for development. She observes teaching regularly and has an accurate view of its quality. The school's progress is carefully monitored against the key milestones from the local authority action plan and the outcomes are translated into the school's raising attainment plan. Senior leaders increasingly take responsibility for moving forward key aspects of the school's work. The core subject leaders are at different stages of development according to their time in the role and experience. They work together effectively and increasingly monitor work and teaching in their areas. However, they are still developing the necessary experience and expertise to evaluate the impact of initiatives in their areas, identify priorities and implement training and change.

The three planning teams formed to manage key changes in the school are increasingly effective. Governors have been linked with each team according to their area of responsibility or link role with staff. The teams enable staff to share ideas and approaches and to plan collectively. They are well led by senior staff.

The governing body has recruited successfully to fill all but one of its vacancies. The experienced governors make an effective contribution in supporting newer governors and modelling the role of holding the school to account. Governors visit lessons to explore specific areas of interest, share in work scrutinies with subject leaders and join the three change teams. All these activities are reported back to staff and to the governing body. The Chair of the Governing Body has undertaken an audit of the governors' skills, experience and training needs which is nearing completion. Governors have a good understanding of the school's progress and further areas for improvement.

Although monitoring and evaluation are stronger than at the time of the inspection in November 2007, some middle leaders are relatively new to their roles and are still developing the skills and experience necessary to evaluate performance and to lead change. Some staff have had to change roles to cover long term absences and this has had an effect on the continuity of developments and the pace of improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective support for the school, including the provision of the interim headteacher and seconded deputy headteacher. Consultants provide timely support and training to subject leaders, assisting in lesson observations, monitoring of work and audit of provision. This support is vital to middle leaders developing the skills to evaluate their areas of responsibility and to build the expertise to provide training and guidance for staff and lead change. The current visit identified other areas of the school, such as the EYFS, where further support would aid development at a time of staffing difficulties. The additional governors appointed by the local authority help to build newer governors' understanding of the role. The school improvement partner has a thorough knowledge of the school and offers challenging support to the senior staff and governors.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve pupils' understanding and basic skills, where this holds them back, to accelerate their progress and to ensure that performance is more consistent across classes and subjects.
- Develop teachers' use of questioning and discussion to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills so that they can better explain and develop their ideas.
- Ensure that subject and key stage leaders evaluate performance in their areas rigorously so that they are able to lead developments and improvement more effectively.