

PROTECT-INSPECTION



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Mrs Gill Denham  
The Headteacher  
Marish Primary School  
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Berkshire  
SL3 8NZ

Dear Mrs Denham

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Marish Primary School

Following my visit with Mick Pye, additional inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 May 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2009. 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 Slough.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Linley  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Marish Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 May 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised documents and samples of the pupils' work. They met with senior leaders, including the acting headteacher, middle leaders, teachers, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, a parent governor and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

There have been some important changes in staffing since the school's inspection. The seconded deputy headteacher has been absent owing to ill health. However, she has recently returned and has secured a permanent position as deputy headteacher at the school. The special educational needs coordinator has left the school and this post is being covered on a temporary basis by the newly-appointed deputy headteacher. One of the Reception class teachers, the Reception Year Leader, is currently on maternity leave and has been replaced by a supply teacher. The acting headteacher has recently been replaced by the substantive headteacher. Both headteachers have worked together for several weeks prior to this change of leadership to aid the transition of headship. Pupil numbers have increased. There are now 692 pupils on roll.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Observations of pupils' learning and the school's data show that there has been an improvement in attainment overall, particularly where the school has had a sharp focus on mathematics as exemplified in Year 6. This improvement has occurred over a short period of time and has been underpinned by a new approach to the curriculum and teaching of mathematics as seen, for example, in Year 1. All staff have benefited from training that has taken place in mathematics which has had an increased focus on assessment. The school monitors pupils' progress better than it did and identifies where pupils underachieve. In English, however, only a small improvement has been made in pupils' attainment and data indicate that the writing targets set for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are unlikely to be met. White British pupils remain a weaker group in terms of attainment, although pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress given the targeted support that they receive. However, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Year 1 make good progress in their writing and attainment in these classes is higher than it was.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- by July 2010, raise the standards in English and mathematics in Year 2 so that at least 80% of pupils achieve the age expected levels in reading, writing and

mathematics and in Year 6, at least 65% of pupils achieve the age-expected levels in English and mathematics combined by: identifying pupils who are underachieving and providing rigorous support for them; ensuring that teachers and leaders regularly monitor all pupils' progress and adapt their lessons accordingly; providing focused subject training for staff, especially in mathematics, to help raise the level of challenge for pupils – satisfactory.

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that it is a friendly school. Most pupils are polite and considerate of others and it is clear that they try hard to behave well in class. Attitudes to learning are generally positive and when teaching is good and teachers are enthusiastic it makes a great difference to their engagement. However, on some occasions, some pupils exhibit challenging behaviour and there is low level disruption in lessons, although this is generally managed well by staff. Although most pupils enjoy school, persistent absenteeism and lateness remain a significant problem. Pupils talk positively about the very recent initiatives that the new headteacher has put in place. They are aware of the incentives for, and celebration of, good attendance. Stronger action has also been taken to improve communication with parents and carers in this respect. For example, a family link worker is working with parents and carers, and a new group. 'Every parent matters' has been established to encourage parents and carers to become more engaged with school life. This initiative is very well supported by the parent governor who met with the inspectors and he has great hopes for its work and future impact on pupils' attendance. Such work and plans have still to bear fruit and more remains to be done to ensure that pupils' attendance improves and at a faster pace.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- take steps to raise levels of attendance to the national average level by March 2011 – inadequate.

#### The effectiveness of provision

Since the inspection, the staff have worked hard to improve their approach to the teaching of mathematics. Good lessons are characterised by the effective use of the interactive whiteboard to motivate pupils and to reinforce learning as the lesson progresses. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils used the interactive whiteboard well to demonstrate to their friends how they had measured a line as they learnt about decimetres and centimetres. The interactive whiteboard was similarly used well in a Year 2 art lesson. Other lessons exemplify good elements of teaching, for example in the positive use of talk partners across a range of different subjects. However, the quality of teaching is inconsistent across year groups and subjects. In some lessons, introductory sessions are too long, with little time planned for pupils to develop the skills they are learning, for example in writing. In other lessons, learning objectives are too restrictive. The outcome of this, for example in English lessons, is that pupils spend most time on repetitive grammar tasks and not

enough time on applying their skills to write at length or indeed to regularly develop their writing skills in other subjects.

The school's data show that increasing numbers of pupils make improved progress. Progress in lessons is more secure because pupils are clearly told what they are expected to learn and how to go about it at the beginning of lessons. However, teachers are not consistent in reminding pupils throughout the lesson of their learning objective and this hinders progress for some. Similarly, while marking has clearly improved, and more information is provided about what can be done to help pupils improve their work, the quality of marking is variable. Success is evident where pupils are invited to be 'peer assessors', as in Year 6 when they assess each others work in English against three different criteria. However, not all pupils are aware of the next steps in their learning or what their targets are. This reflects a very varied approach to the use of targets on a day-to-day basis.

Teachers now have access to a wide range of assessment information. This allows them to monitor pupils' progress on a regular basis. Regular assessments in mathematics and English are carried out that enable teachers to be clear about the levels that pupils are working at. These outcomes are recorded at subject and whole-school level. Pupil progress meetings focus on pupils who require support and help to ensure that teachers are held responsible for the progress that pupils make. Pupils who have special educational needs receive focused support and there are some positive initiatives, such as the Reading Recovery programme which is an effective initiative that is well focused on need. However, the planning of work that challenges all pupils in all lessons is of an inconsistent quality and teachers often identify different tasks, rather than learning outcomes, for pupils of different abilities. An example where this is not the case is in the Nursery. In the Nursery, it is quite clear what children of different abilities will be expected to learn from the activities that are planned for them.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensure pupils in all age groups are making consistently good progress by teachers: providing good levels of challenge in all lessons; using assessment data well to refine planning of every lesson in the light of what has gone before; telling pupils what they have learnt, what they need to do next and how to go about it – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The transition from the acting headteacher to the substantive headteacher has gone well. This is testament to the quality of the working relationship established between the two headteachers. The positive start made by the acting headteacher following the inspection has been built upon rapidly and effectively by the new headteacher. In a matter of weeks, she has turned her attention to the urgent matter of pupils'

attendance and has introduced a range of measures to facilitate improvement. However, she recognises that much remains to be done.

School development planning is satisfactory. It is underpinned by the staff team being developed to enable all to be leaders and to contribute to the school's development in a variety of ways. Fundamental to this is the development of senior and middle leaders. They have received training and accreditation for the course they have completed and, as a result, feel better able to lead and manage than before. Although still developing, they are now clear of the requirements of their role; they recognise their accountability, and that of the teachers in their team, for the progress that pupils make. Leaders are also beginning to develop the confidence to monitor teaching and learning and find the 'peer buddy' system for this task of great benefit.

Leaders have developed an improved tracking system that allows pupils who underachieve to be quickly identified. As a result, a wider range of interventions has been introduced which includes support in spelling, a Reading Recovery programme, a reading support programme and support in mathematics. The school has identified the need to develop a provision map for all the interventions in school and has begun to review the impact of some of these programmes. In so doing, it is clear that a deeper analysis and evaluation of assessment data are required, for example by group, by ability and for those for whom attendance or lateness is an issue. This is to enable the impact of the intervention programmes to be measured effectively and so that the data presented to teachers are useful and more helpful for their planning.

Governors are supportive of the school and welcome the changes introduced to develop all staff as leaders within teams and to further strengthen links with parents. As many governors are new to their role, they have benefited from governor training and from the support provided by the local authority. Governors are mindful of the issue now facing the school in terms of capacity. Although staff morale is high, the imminent departure of another deputy headteacher and other staff changes have the potential to cause instability for the leadership of the school. Governors are now required to develop a more strategic overview of the school's development.

Progress since the last inspection\_on the areas for improvement:

- develop the expertise of all leaders so that they can play a full and active role in whole-school developments and thus raise pupils' achievement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action did not meet requirements when it was first submitted for evaluation. However, it has been amended and the impact of its planned actions is satisfactory. The local authority has provided appropriate support

through consultancy or finance to enable training to take place, for example for middle and senior leaders and for staff training in mathematics. The governing body has been strengthened with the support of a representative of the local authority. Some action has been taken to aid the school's work to improve attendance. However, more remains to be done in this respect and with some urgency.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the strategies used by the school to raise pupils' attainment in writing.