

Serco Inspections
Boundary House
2 Wythall Green Way
Middle Lane
BIRMINGHAM
West Midlands
B47 6LW

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



11 June 2010

Miss Sharon Torrance (Acting Headteacher)
Place Farm Community Primary School
Camps Road
Haverhill
Suffolk
CB9 8HF

Dear Miss Torrance

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Place Farm Community Primary School

Following my visit with Katherine Beck to your school on 9 June 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 February 2010. 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 be appointed subject to the following qualifications:

- that I am notified accordingly
- that they are mentored by the acting headteacher.

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 Suffolk.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Place Farm Community Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 9 June 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the headteacher, other staff, pupils, the new chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

This part of Suffolk is the subject of reorganisation from a three-tier to a two-tier school system. As a result, Place Farm Community Primary School is in the process of expansion as it begins to accommodate two extra year groups that would otherwise have gone to a middle school. Building works are well advanced and staffing arrangements have been made to increase the school's complement of teachers and managers.

Since the last inspection five months ago, the then headteacher has left and the school now has an acting headteacher, previously the deputy head. In addition, close collaborative partnerships are being forged quickly with nearby successful and high-achieving schools so that best practice can be better disseminated. The school now has a new and experienced chair of governors. Currently the school is operating with an unusually high proportion of supply teachers. Permanent appointments of experienced teaching staff have now been made to start in the new academic year. The local authority has undertaken to appoint a new deputy headteacher by September 2010.

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

At the time of the last inspection, standards and progress were well below expectations. More recent examination data is not yet available; however lesson observations confirmed low standards and progress across the school. That said, some improvement is clear in a small minority of classes in which progress is good.

The school has made a determined start in raising the awareness of teachers and learning assistants in the evaluation and teaching of early literacy and numeracy skills, an issue identified at the last inspection. Much professional development has been undertaken. Target setting is increasingly used to drive improvement, though it is not yet evenly embedded across the school. These changes are beginning to result in improvements, notably in Key Stage 1 numeracy. Standards in pupils' reading and writing are low, though with some recent improvements evident in the school's own monitoring data and confirmed in classroom observations. These improvements are helped by the introduction of recent handwriting and presentation, assessment, marking and feedback policies. The effectiveness of this is monitored and has



resulted in better and more informative marking of written work. Good writing and spelling is now well modelled by most teachers. The school has undertaken much development work around the monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress. This has enabled progress and levels of attainment to be systematically monitored for all pupils. Following extensive professional development, the accuracy of these assessments has improved since the last inspection and the process is now yielding useful data which will enable trends both for individuals and groups to be closely monitored.

Because of these improvements those at risk of underachievement are now identified better so that intervention strategies can be implemented quickly. Regular and detailed pupils' progress meetings now take place. Interventions are well-documented so that progress can be better judged. The good practice of some learning support assistants has been identified so that it can be shared better. The success of intervention has been demonstrated in the accelerated learning of those pupils for whom English is an additional language. As at the last inspection, girls continue to make better progress than boys. Pupils who find learning difficult generally make better progress than their peers because they are well supported.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They work constructively with each other in class and speak well of their experiences and their teachers. The school council is active and has been closely involved in decisions regarding new books, decorations and choice of equipment. For example they were involved in the replenishment of the school's book stock following the identification of this as an area for attention in the last inspection.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by – increasing teachers' levels of knowledge in teaching and assessing skills – replacing outdated books – using precise assessment to set challenging targets – monitoring progress carefully to plan for support where it is needed - satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour has improved because teachers are now more consistent in rigorously applying the recently introduced behaviour policy. Pupils understand what the limits are, and what is acceptable. The number of exclusions was low at the last inspection, and has since fallen. Around the school, the behaviour of the vast majority is good. Pupils are helpful, polite, and inquisitive although inspectors observed occasional instances of boisterous behaviour in corridors. In class most behave well, although the extent to which they help each other to learn could usefully be encouraged in a few of classes.



Pupils are clear about how to keep safe and what to do if they need help. They feel safe in school. Attendance has improved markedly since the last inspection and is now just above the national average. This has been achieved by a renewed emphasis on the importance of attendance both within the school, during assemblies, and with parents. An effective rewards and sanctions system is now in operation and those with 100% attendance are entered into a draw to receive family cinema tickets as an incentive to others. The allowing of holidays in term time is now very much by exception.

The school recognises the need to develop further its contributions to the community. Rapidly developing links with nearby partnership schools are enabling pupils to participate in a wider range of activities, for example the local music festival and a Year 1 project to run a community performance. Parents are frequently invited to school events, for example, a recent Egyptian day.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve attendance to a satisfactory level - satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

At the time of the last inspection, teaching and learning were inadequate. This remains the case, although a small number of classes now demonstrate aspects of teaching and learning that are good. Leaders understand that significant improvements are required to teaching and learning if pupils are to reach or exceed the levels of attainment that they are capable of. Overall, standards of attainment are too low in class, despite signs of improvement in some classes.

Much development work has been undertaken to improve the planning of lessons. This is showing improvement as a result, but is not yet sufficiently well embedded in all classes. Teachers are quickly developing a more accurate view of the progress of individual pupils because assessment has improved. In a minority of classes this information is used effectively to vary teaching to cater for the learning needs of all. Learning assistants are increasingly playing an important part in this. However this practice is not yet consistently effective across the school.

Aspects of the teaching of literacy and numeracy have improved at Key Stage 1, and this is beginning to show in the standards that pupils are reaching. In the most effective lessons pupils help each other to learn because they are interested in what they are doing. However, in too many classes this is not the case. Occasionally, bored pupils become restless and learning suffers. Homework is provided, but the school recognises that regularity is very variable and it is often insufficiently demanding. Marking has improved and is now mostly good.



Leaders' evaluations of teaching and learning are close to those of inspectors. However the lesson observation system, though recently redesigned, is inadequate. It is not used systematically and pays insufficient attention to learning and standards in class. It is not being used effectively as an improvement tool. Outcomes are not effectively evaluated to inform professional development and are not embedded well enough in performance management. The identification and sharing of best practice is weak. No regular forum exists for this although rapidly developing links with partner schools will make it possible. The school recognises the need to provide external peer observation opportunities and to train middle leaders in lesson observation techniques.

Care, guidance and support and the curriculum remain satisfactory as at the last inspection. Some aspects of care are better than this however because of the improved identification of those in need of support. This is evident in the work of learning assistants with those pupils who find learning difficult or who need language support because English is not their first language.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment to a consistently good level by: - rigorous and regular monitoring by the senior team – using the outcomes of this monitoring to provide support, training and challenge for individuals - inadequate

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management have improved since the last inspection. The new headteacher has made an effective start to the process of school recovery. Confidence is high and a culture of improvement is beginning to spread with early signs of an effect of standards. This has been helped by the consistent and strong lines being taken on poor attendance and behaviour.

The school improvement plan is accurate and realistic. Targets are challenging but achievable. Plans are well in hand to address the shortfall in attainment of many pupils. Staff are now being challenged much more effectively, and accountability for performance is improving. Teachers' performance management now includes substantial targets for class and individual attainment and progress, but is not yet sufficiently detailed for teaching and learning. Data and information is now being used more effectively to identify success or where attention is needed. Issues of time resources for management have not yet been resolved although a new deputy will be appointed in September.

A new and experienced chair of governors is now in post, together with a new vice chair. They are realistic about the challenges facing the school. The chair is well placed to facilitate collaborative arrangements with nearby schools. Governors



recognise the need to undergo training, especially in the evaluation of school performance data in order that they can challenge the headteacher and staff more effectively. A new self-evaluation process is in hand with improved participation of all staff.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by: - tackling key priorities in the school improvement plan – providing leaders and managers at all levels with training and additional time to fulfil their roles – using data and information to identify success or where more emphasis is needed – increasing governors' awareness of strengths and weaknesses so that they can effectively hold the headteacher to account - satisfactory

External support

The local authority's post-inspection action plan is fit for purpose. Actions are detailed with appropriate timescales and responsibilities. The target for removal from special measures in summer 2011, though suitably ambitious, will depend on improvements to teaching and learning that have resulted in sustained improvements in standards. Since the inspection, local authority support has been satisfactory. Teachers value the specialist support provided by advisors and the advice and guidance that are available.

Priorities for further improvement

- Quickly develop and implement a lesson observation system that:
 - can be applied systematically
 - pays appropriate attention to learning and standards in class
 - accurately identifies issues for development and best practice
 - informs analysis of overall teaching and learning so that professional development and individual targets are effective.