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Dear Miss Dixon

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF COGENHOE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 November, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2004.

This letter 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.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, nominated staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been significant changes to the school's staff since the last monitoring inspection. Three full time teachers and a part time teacher started in September 2005 and they all teach in Key Stage 2. Pupil numbers this year have dropped markedly, from 22 joining the Reception year last year to 11 joining at the start of this academic year. There has been a reduction in the number of classes from six last year to five now. All classrooms were recently fitted with interactive whiteboards.

Achievement and standards

Pupils make satisfactory or good progress in their lessons. In the Foundation Stage, for example, their counting skills are developing well and they are able to work independently for relatively long periods of time. Progress in Key Stage 1 is generally good and, by Year 2, pupils are gaining good knowledge and understanding, for instance, about Michael Faraday and the discovery of electricity. Across Key Stage 2, however, pupils' progress in lessons is more uneven and this is due directly to the quality of teaching. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2 are making good progress in developing their skills of addition and subtraction, whilst in Years 5 and 6 the pupils can accurately use subject terminology in numeracy and are developing their understanding of coordinates. Overall, however, some important gaps remain in the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. The school is aware from its own testing arrangements, for example, that there is significant underachievement in Years 3 and 4 in writing. A high proportion of Year 4 pupils do not achieve appropriate standards in mathematics whilst in Year 5 there is considerable underachievement in mathematics and reading. Boys in Year 5 are underachieving in reading and writing.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- raise standards in all subjects and immediately tackle pupils' underachievement – inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are generally very good. Pupils settle down well to their learning and are aware of the routines and expectations of the staff. They maintain their concentration on the activities set and they work constructively with each other and with the adults. Many pupils are keen to answer questions in whole class discussions and most enjoy their learning. However, a very few pupils, especially boys, have difficulties in maintaining their concentration. They become restless in lessons and distract others. Sometimes, this is a direct result of the weaknesses in the teaching. Around the school the pupils behave in an orderly manner. They are friendly and polite, and keen to talk to visitors. Attendance in lessons was satisfactory.

The school continues to implement its new approach to behaviour management. Training in assertive discipline has been undertaken by all staff and the school reports that there has been a reduction in exclusions. Parents are said to be supportive of the school's approach. Pupils are aware of the school's policy and know what the rewards and sanctions are.

The provision for the pupils' moral, social and cultural development is generally good. Pupils work well with each other and with adults and they know right from wrong. They are appropriately prepared for life in an

ethnically diverse society through, for example, the study of different faiths and examination of art in different parts of the world. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced by a thought for the day in assembly, allowing the pupils time for reflection and contemplation.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- implement consistent strategies for behaviour management and improve provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development – good progress.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory or better in six out of the seven lessons inspected. It was good in three. In the better teaching, the teachers had organised the activities well for the needs of the different ages and abilities. Learning intentions were routinely shared. There was a good recap of work covered previously, with good use of questioning to draw out what pupils had learned before. Pupils were cajoled to respond to this questioning. They were organised well into different groups depending on their needs and they were supported well by the adults. The teaching assistants worked intensively with small groups or with individuals and they enhanced the pupils' progress. The pupils were interested in their learning, and their attitudes and behaviour were often very good. Reception children, for instance, worked constructively with each other for long periods without direct adult supervision. The teacher made appropriate whole class teaching points to inject pace to the learning and to ensure that any conceptual misunderstandings on the part of the children were cleared up. The teachers controlled the classes well and this sometimes enabled them to try out some more adventurous activities. Teaching assistants worked well with pupils who have learning difficulties.

Where the teaching and learning were relatively weak, the role of the teaching assistants was not always clear in the planning and they did not interact enough with the pupils, especially at the start of the session when the teachers were talking to the whole class. Pace sometimes suffered because the teachers allowed the activity to drift and did not make appropriate whole class teaching points. There was not always a proper evaluation of the learning that had occurred. Where the teaching and learning were inadequate, the planning was weak and not adapted for the needs of the different pupils in the class. The pace of the learning was slow, leading to restlessness on the part of pupils. There were basic errors in classroom organisation and management and an inefficient use of time. There was no proper evaluation of the learning with the pupils.

Curriculum planning is being strengthened appropriately throughout the school. A whole school curriculum map has recently been drawn up. Staff are making links between subjects and are trying to ensure that the pupils'

knowledge, understanding and skills are being relevantly developed. Schemes of work have been strengthened for literacy, numeracy and religious education. Further work is being developed for personal, social and health education. Some of the developments, for example in science and information and communication technology, are at an early stage because of the newness of the staff. The school has extended the taught time for Key Stage 2 by five minutes per day.

Teachers and teaching assistants offer generally good oral feedback to the pupils on their work. This is supplemented by regular written comments. However, these are not always helpful or they do not always set suitable targets for the pupils. The school has undertaken a great deal of work in the tracking of the pupils' progress and in setting targets in literacy and numeracy. Test and other assessment data are used to set targets for which the teachers are accountable. This data is used by the headteacher to establish trends, identify areas of underachievement, and to instigate appropriate action.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout Years 2 to 6; improve curriculum planning and ensure that teachers are aware of expectations and what knowledge, skills and understanding pupils should acquire in mixed age classes – satisfactory overall, but good in Year 2
- implement rigorous assessment procedures and use data effectively to plan the next steps of pupils' learning – good progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide very good leadership to the school. She is dedicated and enthusiastic, works hard, and has an acute understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has driven forward many important developments over the last year to improve the quality of provision. She is supported well by the staff and their morale is high. New policies have been introduced and the implementation of these is routinely monitored. The appointment of four new Key Stage 2 teachers in September has meant the reallocation of responsibilities. Some aspects of the school's action plan have been reviewed as a result of this. The plan continues to be strengthened and outcomes are routinely and rigorously monitored and evaluated by the headteacher and the governing body. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work closely together, and the deputy headteacher has developed a good understanding of whole-school issues.

The governing body appointed a new chair in July 2005. He works hard on behalf of the school and is developing a good knowledge and understanding of its provision. Most governors attended training earlier in the academic year. They have decided to hold the school to account through a sponsorship team of two or three governors who have oversight of each priority area. Through

this approach, it is anticipated that the governors will have a much better understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the priority area for which they have responsibility. Each sponsorship team is supposed to visit the school regularly, to observe practice, and to talk to staff. This approach is still at an early stage of development and its full impact is not yet apparent.

Some of the subject leaders have only recently been appointed so the impact of their work across the school has not yet been felt. However, some good leadership is being provided in some subjects, for example literacy, numeracy and religious education.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- develop the leadership and management of subject leaders and key staff to ensure that teaching and curriculum are led and managed effectively – satisfactory.

External support

The LA has continued to provide good support to the school. Some of its advisory staff have visited regularly, helped with the development of schemes of work, undertaken joint observations of lessons, and taught model lessons. As a result, the expertise of the staff is being enhanced. The school improvement adviser is new to the school and is developing her knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the teaching and learning where it is weak or inadequate.
- Improve the leadership and management skills of all subject leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Champak Chauhan
H M Inspector