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Dear Miss Dixon

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF COGENHOE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 March 2006, 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 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, subject leaders, pupils from the school council, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection a teacher has decided to leave the school at Easter and a full time, permanent replacement has been appointed for the start of the summer term. The outdoor area for the Foundation Stage has been completed and is now fully in use.

Achievement and standards

Results in Key Stage 1 over the last three years have declined. In 2005, the proportion of pupils achieving at least the expected Level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics fell significantly from the results in 2004. The proportion achieving Level 2B fell markedly in reading and writing but the fall was most dramatic in mathematics where less than half the pupils achieved this level. Overall, the results in reading were below average whilst the results in writing fell from above average to broadly in line with the average. They were significantly below average in mathematics.

In Key Stage 2 the proportion of pupils attaining at least the expected Level 4 in English fell from 91% in 2004 to 79% in 2005. However, the results in mathematics improved slightly whilst in science there was a significant improvement with all pupils attaining at least the expected level. Overall, the average points score in English fell significantly from 29.6 in 2004 to 27.0 in 2005 and is now in line with the national average. In mathematics and science the results were broadly in line with national averages.

Taking into account the pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 1 pupils are not making enough progress by the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. This is an area of concern which the school recognises that it needs to address more effectively.

The school continues to be aware of the deficiencies in the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills through its programme of regular assessment and testing. Pupils are routinely assessed in their core skills and their weaknesses identified. This information is used by the senior managers to target additional support for those underachieving or in danger of doing so. Additional teaching assistants are being used through withdrawal work to develop the pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' underachievement is being appropriately tackled.

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

- raise standards in all subjects and immediately tackle pupils' underachievement—satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils in lessons and around the school continue to be generally very good. Pupils settle down to their learning quite quickly and they know the routines and expectations of the staff. Many are keen to participate in whole class discussions. Most are well motivated and feel secure enough to offer oral answers, even when they are not sure whether the answer is right. The pupils work well with each other in pairs and in groups and they have constructive relationships with the adults. Most maintain their concentration on the tasks set and generally enjoy their

learning activities. A few pupils, however, especially a handful of boys in Year 3, continue to display challenging behaviour. This sometimes hinders the learning of others.

Around the school, the pupils are well behaved. They continue to be polite and courteous to visitors and are generally helpful to adults. The school council meets regularly and its views are taken into account. It has been instrumental in improving provision, for example, by suggesting that lighting is improved in one of the rooms and ordering additional play equipment such as bean bags and wooden stilts. The school's attendance rate for the year 2004–2005 was 96.1%, higher than the 94.6% achieved by other primary schools nationally.

The school continues to develop a more consistent approach to the management of behaviour. Pupils are aware of the school's policy and they know what the rewards and sanctions are. They are supportive of the approach the school takes in managing behaviour. Pupils report that there is not much physical bullying but there are some instances of name calling. They report these to staff but say that these are not always properly dealt with.

The school encourages pupils to eat healthily, an approach which the pupils value. They are also taught about the dangers of smoking and of drug abuse, and some report that the work in the management of anger is effective.

The provision for the pupils' moral, social and cultural development continues to be generally good. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They are encouraged to participate in the wider community through the raising of money for charitable causes, for example Cancer Research. They are prepared for life in an ethnically diverse society through, for instance, the study of different religions, an appreciation of music from different parts of the world, and an arts week celebrating art from different cultures. The pupils' spiritual development continues to be strengthened by prayer and moments for reflection in assembly.

Progress on the area 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 has improved since the last monitoring inspection. It was at least satisfactory, with some instances of good practice. In the better practice the teachers' planning was detailed, it identified appropriate learning intentions, and the range of activities met the needs of the different ages and abilities well. The role of the teaching assistant had

been identified in some detail. The teachers used the interactive whiteboard effectively and sometimes encouraged the pupils to use it. The teachers had good questioning skills which they used to extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding. The pupils, in turn, responded well to the questioning and many were keen to participate in this. The pace to the learning was appropriate and it was enhanced by the periodic injection of whole class teaching points. Relationships between the pupils and between the adults and the pupils were good. Such lessons were characterised by a good learning environment and in some classes the quality of work on display was good. Some staff, both teachers and teaching assistants, skilfully managed the challenging behaviour of a few pupils.

Where the teaching and learning were not as good the pace to the learning was sometimes slow. Work was not always sufficiently challenging for the range of abilities, especially the more able. In some of the planning, methods for assessing the progress of individual pupils had not been properly identified.

Curriculum planning continues to be strengthened across the school. Subject leaders have worked hard to provide greater leadership and direction to staff about the requirements in the different subjects. There is a much better understanding of this in the school and curriculum continuity and progression are being enhanced. Additional resources have also been purchased to improve the provision in different subjects.

The school has strengthened its provision for meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. The manager for special educational needs undertakes all the administrative duties that are necessary. She and the headteacher work closely together to monitor the progress of pupils who have learning difficulties. Staff are aware of the specific targets for such pupils and incorporate them into their teaching and learning.

The school has continued to improve its assessment procedures. The gathering and analysis of data are good at whole school level but more detailed assessment methods are not yet routinely identified in the teachers' weekly planning.

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—good progress
- 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. She works hard and is dedicated to improving the school. As a result, the provision for the pupils continues to be enhanced. She and the deputy headteacher work well together and they have a good knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The staff work hard and are committed to improving their practice, both as teachers and as subject leaders. Morale is high and there is a good ethos and teamwork. The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor and evaluate the work of the school effectively. They observe lessons, scrutinise the pupils' work, and check the teachers' planning. More recently, such work has also begun to be undertaken by subject leaders. Such activities have led to a much better understanding about strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. The school has a good capacity to improve further because of such activities.

The governing body continues to meet regularly. It is holding the school more to account through its 'sponsorship teams' which examine progress in each of the areas identified for the school's improvement. In addition, the governors have an overview of the school's progress through their good and innovative 'tracker grid' which is updated monthly. Some governors visit regularly and a few write in-depth reports about their visits. The headteacher provides governors with the required information about the school's progress. This information is supplemented by other nationally produced information, for instance on standards in the school. The governing body has a good overview of the school's progress and of the areas that need further development. It is providing the school with greater strategic direction.

The chair of governors works very hard on behalf of the school. He visits regularly, observes lessons, and takes a keen interest in the school's development. He is very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses. He has recently produced an appropriate development plan for the governing body.

Progress on the area 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 progress with some good features.

External support

The LA has continued to provide good support to the school. Its advisory staff visit regularly and help the school staff to plan and teach more effectively. Recent involvement with the school has included work in information and communication technology and in humanities. Further work has been planned in improving the provision for science for which the LA has allocated an additional £1,800 to the school. The school improvement adviser visits

regularly, monitors and evaluates the work of the school, and has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures–satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection–good.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve teaching and learning through the identification and use of more robust assessment procedures in the teachers' short term planning.
- Continue to strengthen the role and effectiveness of subject leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of the Children and Young People's Service for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Champak Chauhan
H M Inspector