



16 October 2006

Mr R Koon
Headteacher
Clackclose Community Primary School
Nursery Road
Downham Market
Norfolk
PE38 9PF

Dear Mr Koon

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CLACKCLOSE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with 2 Additional Inspectors to your school on 27 and 28 September 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2005.

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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, core subject leaders, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the Local Authority (LA).

Context

A new permanent headteacher took up his post at the start of September 2006. Interviews took place earlier this month to recruit a permanent deputy headteacher, but no appointment was made. The existing deputy headteacher has agreed to remain in post until a successful appointment is made. Three new teachers have joined the school this term; a nursery teacher, a Year 1 class teacher and a newly qualified teacher for the Year 3 and 4 class.

Achievement and standards

Standards in Key Stage 1 are inadequate. Results in this year's national tests are below the national average in reading, writing and to a lesser extent mathematics, with no pupils attaining above the expected level 2 in writing or mathematics. Standards in Key Stage 2 are inadequate, as reflected in below average results in national tests for Year 6. Although results improved in English and the school exceeded its own target, they remain below the national average. There was a slight improvement in mathematics but overall, results are well below average. Science results fell in 2006 and are below the national average. The attainment of girls at the end of Year 6 is noticeably lower than that of boys.

Achievement is inadequate overall. Although some pupils achieve satisfactorily in lessons, too many do not make the progress they should, especially in Years 1 and 2 because teaching is not consistently good enough. Pupils' writing skills are weak because some teachers' expectations are often too low and they do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their writing in lessons other than in literacy. In science, teachers do not require pupils to provide more detailed and accurate written work or to consider real-life applications of what they have found in their investigations. Recent improvements in resources and specialist support are improving pupils' skills in information and communication technology, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply these skills regularly in other lessons.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- improve achievement, above all in English, maths, science and ICT – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour has dipped slightly since the last monitoring visit due to pupils having forgotten routines and adjusting to new teachers. The majority of pupils behave appropriately and those with challenging behaviour are well supported by teaching assistants. However, inspectors noticed that learning can occasionally be interrupted because of some pupils' inappropriate behaviour. There has only been one exclusion since the last monitoring visit and the number of pupils excluded is well below average. Attendance rates remain broadly similar to the national average.

Pupils report that, 'playtimes are 'OK, but could be better'. The friendship benches are not fully operational yet and 'handy helpers' are still to be

appointed. Pupils feel supervision at lunchtimes could be improved and would like some of the effective ways of coping with bullying such as the 'thought and worry box' to be used by every class, not just some. Systems of ensuring pupils are safe are in place and the latest guidance on checking those working with children is being followed. There has been some improvement to school lunches but pupils would like to be involved in further discussions about meals and have some strong views, in particular they feel there should be more choice. Some progress has been made; younger pupils have free fruit, older pupils have healthy snacks at break times and sweets are no longer allowed.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- resolve the few remaining pupil behaviour difficulties which disrupt others' learning – satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory, however the progress made in improving the quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Although there is some good teaching, overall it is not consistently good enough, particularly in Years 1 and 2, to help pupils achieve as well as they should. There have been some recent improvements, for example, in lesson planning and the use of teacher assistants, although this is not consistent across the school. Some teachers do not always identify clear learning objectives or use assessment information to ensure that more able pupils are sufficiently challenged to achieve higher levels of attainment.

The pace of lessons is not maintained and some teachers do not regularly remind pupils how long they have left to complete their work. A few teachers use follow-up questions to extend more able pupils but in general, questioning fails to engage all learners and too many are allowed to sit back and let others do the work. Pupils clearly enjoy their learning in lessons where the teaching grasps their attention, for example, when looking at interesting historical artefacts or when interactive whiteboards in classrooms are used to bring lessons to life. However, there were too few examples of teaching that stimulates or engages the interest of all learners. Pupils are being given more encouragement to think for themselves before asking the teacher for help. It is early days, but signs are positive. The school continues to make good progress on providing a more balanced curriculum for all pupils. Timetables now include a greater focus on pupils' reading through more frequent use of guided reading activities.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- improve teaching, learning and achievement, above all in English, maths, science and ICT – inadequate progress
- ensure that timetables provide a balanced curriculum for all classes, utilising at least the recommended minimum curriculum time – good progress

Leadership and management

It is too early to see much impact of the improvements the newly appointed headteacher has planned, however in a short period of time he has 'made his mark' and shared his plans for developing the school with teachers, pupils and parents. He is well aware of the issues facing the school and appreciates the need to demonstrate a prompt improvement in standards whilst at the same time, securing long-lasting improvements to the school. He has made a good start by reorganising classes in Key stage 1 and in Year 5 so pupils are taught in same-age classes. The headteacher is also building capacity to improve by extending the leadership team to include key subject leaders, and a permanent deputy headteacher to take full responsibility for standards achieved in Key Stage 1. A meeting is planned with the LA to resolve issues relating to the school's split-site.

The role of subject leaders continues to develop steadily; these roles are still very new and now need to become firmly established. They have regular non-contact time to monitor performance data, to observe lessons and advise teachers on the most effective ways of raising achievement. Evaluating the effectiveness of this monitoring programme is fundamental to raising achievement of all pupils in core subjects. Teachers are making some use of the accurate data available to them but would benefit from further guidance on standardised, manageable procedures for gauging pupil progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- make subject management more effective, particularly in consistent use of assessment systems – satisfactory progress
- clarify the relationship between senior managers and staff so that all policies are effectively and consistently implemented – good progress
- work with the relevant authorities to minimise the impact of the split site and to plan for the long-term solution to the problem – satisfactory progress.

External support

The LA has provided satisfactory support for the school so far. A senior development adviser is now ideally placed to coordinate additional and appropriate support for the school and to challenge staff and governors to make the necessary improvements that will move the school out of special measures.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate

One NQT has been appointed in September 2006. Any further appointments of NQT's must be referred to HMI.

Priorities for further improvement

- raise achievement by ensuring the quality of teaching and learning is consistently, at least good throughout the school
- monitor how well assessment data is used to plan and review learning and to identify those pupils who are not achieving as well as they should be

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
H M Inspector