



22 June 2005

Mrs C Scott
Headteacher
Pangbourne Primary School
Kennedy Drive
Pangbourne
RG8 7LB

Dear Mrs Scott

Implementation of Pangbourne Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 June 2005, I write to confirm the findings and to notify you of the outcomes.

As you know, the inspection was part of a policy involving a broader series of visits by HMI and Additional Inspectors to check on the development and improvement of schools where the section 10 inspection indicated that the school was underachieving. You will recall that the aims of the visit were to assess the progress made in addressing and eliminating underachievement and meeting the targets given in the action plan. I also evaluated standards of achievement and the quality of education, especially in relation to areas of underachievement.

During the visit I inspected ten lessons or part lessons; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with yourself, the chair of governors, a representative of the LEA and nominated staff on the causes and areas of underachievement. I also examined a range of the pupils' work and spoke informally with other staff and pupils.

On the basis of the evidence gathered during the visit, I made the following observations to you, the chair of governors and a representative of the LEA.

The pupil numbers, in common with those in many schools, are falling and the school must therefore reduce the number of classes and increase the responsibilities carried by individual staff. For this reason, the governors have taken the decision to appoint an acting deputy headteacher for this academic year.

The school's action plan is adequate in showing how the school will address the shortcomings in the assessment systems and in teaching and standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT), as well as in the co-ordination of these two subjects. Appropriate actions are shown and responsibilities are allocated. There are targets for achievement and expected

outcomes. Some of the plan is costed and there are suitable methods for monitoring the progress being made. However, the plan does not show how the roles of the senior management team and other co-ordinators are to be developed; although the school has been involved in the Primary Leadership Programme for some time, this is not evident in the plan. No strategies are shown to evaluate the success of the plan nor are there measurable targets to demonstrate the impact it is to have on the pupils' attainment.

In the statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 1, the results did not exceed the national average until 2004, when they were well above average in reading, above in mathematics but below in writing. The most recent test results in 2005 compared reasonably well with the 2004 results for all schools nationally and with those of similar schools in reading and mathematics but continued to be weaker in writing. At the end of Key Stage 2 the results have been stronger, at least comparable with the national average and sometimes above. In 2004 the results were higher than the national average in English and mathematics, and average in science. However they were not as strong when compared with those of similar schools, particularly in science. Nevertheless, the results suggested that the pupils had made good progress in English and mathematics in relation to their prior attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. The trend of improvement has been below the national trend at Key Stage 1 but above it at Key Stage 2, for which results are predicted to be similar this year.

The school has analysed the results of the statutory and optional tests to show the areas of strength and weakness in the pupils' knowledge and understanding. There is now an adequate bank of data which is used to identify those pupils who are not making sufficient progress and those who are on track to reach the targets for the end of each year. This is a sound start and the school is in a position to begin to judge where the most and least progress is being made.

Speaking skills are above average throughout the school; most pupils are articulate, use a wide vocabulary and are confident in expressing themselves at some length. Teachers give many opportunities for the pupils to speak at length and explain their ideas. However, while their listening skills are above average at Key Stage 1, they are not developed to the same degree at Key Stage 2. Many of the older pupils have difficulty in attending to what others are saying. They wish to express their own points of view rather than to respond to others' contributions and they sometimes interrupt or shout out. The pupils' facility with language is often reflected in their writing, which often shows a better than usual fluency and use of structure, although attainment is at the expected level overall. Most pupils write interestingly and with a good vocabulary but their spelling and punctuation are not as well developed and are sometimes forgotten in individual pieces of writing, particularly when they have not shown enough care in presentation. There is evidence of a range of writing for different purposes and audiences but while there is a reasonable amount of extended or sustained writing in Year 2, the evidence is limited for the older pupils. There is still insufficient opportunity for the pupils in many classes to develop their writing skills through the curriculum. Attainment in

reading is higher than the expected level; most pupils read competently with a secure understanding of the text. The guided reading session observed was a good experience for the pupils who were taught by adults, and they made appreciable gains in their skills. However, it was not a valuable use of time for those who were reading independently and for whom there was little guidance about how they were to improve.

Standards in mathematics are mainly above those expected, although they are more variable between classes than those in writing. Most pupils have a secure recall of number bonds and place value and they work rapidly and accurately. However, some of the pupils in Year 6 had difficulty in knowing how to approach a mathematical problem in a logical way. The pupils' work demonstrates that most have made at least satisfactory progress in Years 2 and 6 in English and mathematics.

The pupils' behaviour was satisfactory and often good, around the school and in most lessons; they were generally attentive and co-operative. The pupils' attitudes to learning were usually satisfactory and in the more successful lessons they were good. Most paid careful attention and were eager to respond but there was some fuss, inattention and shouting out in a number of lessons. On one occasion, many pupils in the class were rude and lacking in respect for the teacher and for one another from the start and the teacher was unable to gain their attention. There have been three temporary exclusions this year. Attendance is similar to the national average and is managed satisfactorily by the school.

Of the ten lessons observed, the teaching was good in three, satisfactory in four but unsatisfactory in three. These proportions of good and unsatisfactory teaching present a less positive picture than at the time of the inspection and of the joint review of teaching with the LEA. Class management was mainly satisfactory and there was a calm working atmosphere in most classrooms, particularly at Key Stage 1. When the teaching was most successful, the tasks built rapidly on the pupils' knowledge and understanding, at the appropriate level for each ability group. The pace was brisk and high expectations were demonstrated by challenging tasks. The pupils were prepared well for their work, with clear explanations. The teaching was lively, energetic and enthusiastic; the teachers had good subject knowledge and inspired the pupils to be totally involved. Activities were interesting and were set at suitable levels for the range of attainment in the class.

Throughout the school, the planning was usually reasonably detailed, showing what the pupils were to learn from the activities and therefore providing the teachers with benchmarks to judge the effectiveness of their work. The teachers are beginning to use differentiated objectives but this practice was inconsistent and some were using them far more effectively in their lessons than others. Many teachers used questioning effectively, to probe understanding and to promote thinking and the development of language. However, a number of teachers tended to ask only those pupils who volunteered to answer rather than directing their

questioning to involve all the pupils. Teaching assistants were usually deployed well during activities and gave good support to the groups and individuals with whom they worked. However, their time was not always used effectively during the whole-class teaching sessions, when they were generally under-occupied. On most occasions, the pupils maintained concentration and worked together reasonably co-operatively, although there were occasions when they spent too long listening to the teacher or sitting on the carpet and became restless.

There were some major weaknesses in the teaching. In one lesson it was evident that the teacher did not have the specialist knowledge needed to teach the concept which it was planned that the pupils should learn. In another instance, the teacher did not have the control strategies to gain the attention of pupils who had a poor attitude to learning. In a third lesson, the activities the pupils were to undertake were not planned adequately to extend and consolidate what they had already learned.

Assessment procedures are developing satisfactorily. The teachers keep records of their pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics and use these to plan further lessons. The LEA has provided considerable support to develop the teachers' understanding of the levels of the National Curriculum to improve the accuracy of their assessments. The school has made a start in setting targets for the pupils in English and mathematics but these are not yet evident in most classes. Many teachers have started to annotate their planning to show the effectiveness of their lessons but this practice varies considerably. While some notes showed the progress the pupils in each group had made, others were in the form of general comments.

Marking is satisfactory in English and mathematics but does not support teaching adequately in many other subjects. Work is marked regularly, and the written comments are often linked to the purpose of the lesson, giving the pupils analytical feedback about the quality of their work. However, this practice has not been extended to many of the foundation subjects, in which some work has not been marked.

Leadership and management are adequate overall. The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher work closely as a team and have begun to develop the effectiveness of the senior management. Monitoring has been carried out, particularly in partnership with the LEA, and leaders are developing an understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning. Monitoring and scrutiny of work are becoming a regular part of management and are therefore helping to identify the pupils who are doing well and those who are underachieving. However, because assessment for tracking is at an early stage, it is not an effective management tool to pinpoint where the teaching is more or less effective. Planning for school improvement is somewhat limited in scope. The action plan is coming to the end of its term, and further plans have been drawn up in the same format to address the areas for improvement in the coming year. However, there is little additional planning to cover other areas.

Subject leadership is developing. As a result of staffing changes, some co-ordinators are relatively new in post. Senior staff are eager to contribute to the school's improvement but most are at a relatively early stage in their development as leaders. Subject co-ordinators write action plans; those drawn up for areas which have been a major focus for improvement are satisfactory in showing how standards are to be raised. The remaining plans represent a satisfactory start in focusing on schemes and resources but are at an early stage in analysing standards and how to raise them. Governance continues to develop well under the effective leadership of the chair of governors.

The school's self-evaluation showed clearly the actions that had been taken since the inspection in a number of areas and the impact of those initiatives. This was a rigorous review, undertaken jointly with the LEA and identifying the improvements in teaching, as well as the areas in which further progress was needed. However, the self-evaluation did not cover all the areas for improvement. While it dealt in detail with assessment, the quality of teaching and the co-ordination of science, it did not address sufficiently: the development of ICT, including its use across the curriculum; the work of the senior management team; and the use of writing in all subjects.

The LEA identified the school as a cause for concern well before the inspection and has continued to give good support from that time. Focused guidance and training have been given on improving teaching and developing the skills of leadership and management.

Evaluation of Progress:

Progress has been uneven in raising the pupils' attainment and addressing the areas for improvement. The progress in developing assessment has been reasonable, although there is still a long way to go in ensuring that assessment informs teaching. The co-ordination of science is now satisfactory, although standards remain too low. Improvements in ICT have been hindered by poor resources and teachers' insecure knowledge, although the school has appropriate plans to enhance further both these aspects of the provision. The progress in developing the roles of senior managers and subject co-ordinators has been reasonable. However, progress in improving the quality of teaching has been limited. This has also been the case for developing the use of English and ICT across the curriculum.

The school is making limited progress towards raising the pupils' attainment and eliminating underachievement.

In relation to the action plan and the impact of the actions taken, reasonable progress has been made in addressing most of the key tasks which relate to the school's underachievement.

This visit has raised serious concerns about the standard of education provided by the school and I am recommending a return visit.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors and the Corporate Director (Children and Young People) for West Berkshire. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mrs P C Cox
Additional Inspector

cc: chair of governors
LEA