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Ms C Pyke
The Headteacher
Grendon Junior and Infant School
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B14 4RB
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Dear Ms Pyke

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GRENDON JUNIOR & INFANT SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Sheila Boyle, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 November 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 September 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, assessment coordinator, coordinators for English and mathematics, members of the new middle management team, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and two representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the second monitoring visit in June 2006, five full time and two part time teachers have left the school. Four new teachers have been appointed on permanent contracts and one teacher has returned from maternity leave.

Achievement and standards

Standards in the 2006 national assessments in writing and mathematics fell for pupils in Years 2 and 6 and were too low. The school's analysis of its own assessment data for pupils in Years 3 to 6 shows that approximately half of the pupils have made good progress in writing and over a third have made good progress in mathematics over the past term. However, it also indicates that there is still significant underachievement throughout Key Stage 2.

Work seen in lessons and in pupils' books indicates that the progress made by the majority of pupils is now at least satisfactory in most lessons. However, inconsistencies in teaching mean that, in a minority of lessons, too many pupils are insufficiently challenged and do not make as much progress as they should. The school is implementing appropriate strategies to tackle this underachievement but evidence of pupils making better progress is not consistent throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school's code of conduct and teachers' high expectations help pupils to learn about how their behaviour can affect others. Pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is generally good. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their work and participate well in the planned activities. However, there are occasions when some pupils are distracted or become restless in lessons. This usually occurs in lessons where tasks are not well matched to those pupils' needs and abilities. Pupils are happier now that the number of different teachers they have has been significantly reduced. A number of younger pupils explained how they really like school and feel that staff look after them well and try to make learning enjoyable.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has continued to improve. In almost a third of lessons seen, pupils were taught well and made good progress. However, there are still too many lessons where pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable because teaching is not good enough. The school's clear and helpful teaching and learning policy has not been consistently implemented throughout the school.

The best lessons are well planned and teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies to motivate and engage the pupils. They set clear learning objectives and success criteria based on sound knowledge of pupils' prior learning. Frequent reference is made to these during lessons and they are used to assess the progress pupils have made by the end of the lesson. Teachers make effective use of questioning to challenge pupils' thinking and extend their understanding. Exciting practical activities are used to engage

pupils in their learning. For example, children in Reception enjoyed developing their number skills whilst making pizza.

In the less effective lessons, planning is not used well enough to ensure that work meets the needs of the individual pupils. They are not always clear about what they are supposed to be learning and what they are expected to achieve. Pupils frequently spend too long sitting and listening to the teacher and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to become involved in their learning. Too much time is spent consolidating previous work, restricting the amount of new learning that takes place. Activities often lack excitement and challenge, leading to restless behaviour.

The school has recently implemented a marking policy which sets appropriate expectations for teachers. The majority of pupils receive regular feedback on what they have done well and guidance on how to improve future work. However, marking is not always followed up consistently, so not all pupils are improving as quickly as they could.

There are planned opportunities for pupils to apply what they have learnt in English and mathematics in other subjects. When the teachers mark this work they provide specific guidance to help pupils achieve their literacy or numeracy targets. This is helping the pupils to improve these skills.

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

- improve the teaching in Years 3, 4 and 5 in order to raise standards in mathematics and writing – satisfactory
- increase the amount of mathematics and writing carried out across the different subjects in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school have continued to improve. Clearly defined roles for senior leaders and middle managers have now been established. There are clear lines of responsibility and the work of leaders and managers is rightly focused on teaching and learning. The newly appointed phase leaders play an important role in supporting teachers as well as carrying out focused monitoring activities.

Senior leaders have prepared and implemented a clear and systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation activities. These are carried out rigorously with full involvement of the school's leadership team. Where appropriate, all teachers are included, such as in the scrutiny of pupils' work throughout the school. The information gathered from monitoring activities is evaluated thoroughly and appropriate actions are put in place to bring about improvements in teaching and learning. Where unsatisfactory teaching has been observed, targets are set and support is implemented quickly. Further observations take place to monitor progress and ensure that issues are being

addressed effectively. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and the majority of pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress in lessons.

The school carries out frequent assessments of pupils' abilities and keeps comprehensive records. However, these are cumbersome and the school has difficulty in using this information to demonstrate the effect of its work on the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils.

The strategy committee rightly includes senior members of staff, governors and representatives of the local authority (LA). It is effective in monitoring the work of the school as well as the support of the LA. Sensible, searching questions are asked and the committee provides robust information to the governing body to enable it to fulfil its responsibility of holding the school to account.

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

- carry out more rigorous monitoring of the school's work, especially teaching, to identify and tackle problems at an earlier stage – satisfactory.

External support

The LA has continued to provide satisfactory support for the school. In particular, the support of a consultant headteacher has enabled the headteacher to develop her leadership skills significantly. The school's link advisor has provided helpful support to the governing body. The work of literacy and numeracy consultants and a specialist literacy teacher have helped the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make full use of assessment data to track the progress of all pupils in order to target support and eliminate underachievement.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Learning and Culture for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector