

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



8 May 2007

Mr E Cottle
The Headteacher
Linden Grove Primary School
Stanhope Road
Ashford
Kent
TN23 5RN

Dear Mr Cottle

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LINDEN GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Gavin Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 May 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2006.

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, senior leaders, governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA) and held informal discussions with staff and pupils.

Context

Since the inspection in November 2006 the headteacher resigned and was replaced in March 2007 by an advisory headteacher. The governors have planned to recruit a substantive headteacher to lead the school from January 2008.

Achievement and standards

Standards are still low. Although standards are rising, too many pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Analysis of the school's own data, scrutiny of samples of pupils' work, and lesson observations show that only around 60% of pupils are achieving, or are close to achieving, the standards expected for their ages. However, the progress that pupils make is at least satisfactory in most lessons and in around half it is good.

Pupils who have additional needs, both those who have learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are gifted and talented, are not well catered for in some classes which means that they do not make the progress that they should in some lessons.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- raise standards of achievement in English and mathematics for all groups of pupils from Year 1 to Year 6, by ensuring that teachers have well informed realistically high expectations of what pupils can achieve – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Attitudes to learning and pupils' enjoyment of lessons are at least satisfactory and often they are good. Despite the school's best efforts attendance, although improving, remains below average.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all but two of the lessons seen and was good in around half. This profile of teaching is similar to that identified by the school's own monitoring of lessons. The good lessons were well planned, delivered at a brisk pace, and provided a suitable range of tasks and activities that were well matched to the pupils' needs and interests. In these lessons teachers had high expectations for what pupils could achieve. In the less successful lessons pace was pedestrian and not enough was expected of the pupils, and planning did not take sufficient account of the precise needs of all groups of pupils. Pupils who had additional needs were not well supported or sufficiently engaged and, as a consequence, did not make as much progress as they should.

Assessment and tracking procedures have improved and are now satisfactory. However, as they are still quite new, not all teachers make best use of the information gathered, in order to set challenging activities for the wide range of pupils' needs in their classes. Marking is satisfactory overall but there are still some inconsistencies. Where the older children are concerned marking does not provide enough clear written advice to help pupils consistently improve or develop their work. Targets for pupils' learning, based on assessment information, are also fairly

recently adopted. All classes have targets for literacy and numeracy which are recorded in pupils' books and well displayed in the class, but these targets are not always fully understood by pupils. Most pupils know what their targets are but many are not sufficiently sure of exactly what they need to do to achieve them. Targets are not yet refined enough to take account of the wide range of abilities in classes.

Teachers usefully provide success criteria when explaining the learning objective for a lesson but these are not developed with the pupils and they are not always fully exploited to get the pupils to evaluate their own progress towards their targets.

The profile and status of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities have both been raised substantially in the main school, bringing them more closely in line with those noted in the speech and language unit. Because of better identification of pupils needing support, the list of pupils receiving such support is now more accurate. There is now a closer liaison between the speech and language unit and the special needs coordinator, who is also the inclusion manager. As a result, there is now more opportunity to share expertise, take on joint training, and provide more support for classroom teachers and their assistants. Draft plans are in place to review and revise the deployment of staff in order to provide more targeted support for learners in the mainstream school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- ensure that rigorous checks are regularly made of the progress that all groups of pupils make in each class, so that underachievement is identified and tackled at an early stage – satisfactory
- ensure that all pupils know what they need to do to reach the next steps in learning – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Leadership is satisfactory. The current leadership team have been working together for a very short time and their main focus has been on developing systems and procedures to address the weaknesses identified by the inspection in November 2006. Since the arrival of the advisory headteacher in March, there has been a marked increase in the pace of improvement and in staff confidence. Systems to enable senior leaders to track the progress that pupils make are developing rapidly and these, combined with rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, ensure that senior leaders are well informed about progress and have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. Team working is being encouraged and subject leaders are increasingly held accountable for the standards achieved in their subjects.

Plans are in place for those teachers who lead subjects across the school to receive further support, so that they can be more accountable for standards in the subjects they manage. Literacy and numeracy already have action plans and draft plans have

been produced for improvements to be made in the provision for pupils with learning difficulties. These will feed into the school's overall development plan. Classroom teachers are increasingly expected to take responsibility for identifying and remedying underachievement in their classes.

Governors are now aware that they need to play a more active role in challenging the school and recognise that further training and development are required to enable them to act as an effective critical friend.

External support

The local authority has provided intensive support for the school since January this year, particularly in relation to improving the quality of teaching and developing subject leadership. The actions taken as a direct result of the LA's statement of action are having a positive impact and as leadership continues to develop, senior leaders are more actively involved in identifying the nature of the support that the school requires.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed in the Foundation Stage.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that pupils who have additional needs are enabled to learn as well as they can in mainstream classes.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children Families and Education Directorate for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
H M Inspector