



16 June 2005

Ms K Parsons
Acting Headteacher
Ravenhurst Primary School
Ravenhurst Road
Braunstone
Leicester LE3 2PS

Dear Ms Parsons

Implementation of Ravenhurst Primary School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Dilip Kadodwala HMI and Louise Soden HMI to your school on 25 and 26 May 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the quality of the action plan; the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school's action plan is satisfactory.

The LEA's statement of action is satisfactory.

The school has made reasonable progress since being subject to special measures.

The LEA's target date of autumn 2006 for the removal of special measures is realistic.

The school is permitted to appoint one newly qualified teacher.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Leicestershire LEA. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF RAVENHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 18 parts of lessons and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the chair of governors and senior managers. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the acting headteacher, the chair of the governing body and representatives from the LEA.

The school's action plan is clearly laid out and provides suitable information about resources and funding. Overarching success criteria for each key issue are appropriately framed as measurable targets to be achieved before the school is ready to emerge from special measures. For each element of the plan, a series of appropriate actions is outlined, with starting and finishing dates and expected outcomes. Each key issue also has a helpful series of key questions to help monitor progress. Personnel drawn from a reasonably broad range of senior staff are clearly specified to lead and monitor actions. Evaluation strategies are identified and there are generally appropriate milestones to help set the pace of improvement.

The LEA's commentary on the governors' action plan includes relevant judgements about the need for the school in the area and its capacity to implement the action plan. The LEA expresses concern regarding the current capacity of the leadership and management of the school to implement the action plan. It has seconded a consultant headteacher for the summer term 2005 to increase capacity. At this point, the LEA does not intend to appoint additional governors or to suspend the school's right to a delegated budget. The LEA's action plan is detailed. It is providing extensive access to advisory personnel and good practice elsewhere in the LEA. An evaluation group of an officer, adviser, the acting headteacher and the chair of the governing body meet termly to review the school's progress. Targets to evaluate the impact of the LEA's support are appropriately linked to those of the governors' action plan.

Pupils' attainment on starting school is broadly average and their achievement is satisfactory in the reception year. When compared with all schools, national test results in 2004 at the end of Year 2 were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher than expected level (Level 3), was also well below average. Standards of work seen during the inspection show that standards are improving steadily in reading and mathematics, but standards in writing lag behind. The school's assessments indicate that pupils' progress is good overall in reading and mathematics, including progress for the higher-attaining pupils.

National test results at the end of Year 6 were well below average in English, mathematics and science when compared with all schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher than expected level (Level 5) was also well below average in English and below average in mathematics and science. The school's own assessments suggest that results in the forthcoming tests should be above those of the previous year in mathematics and science. Assessments for English have yet to be completed. Standards in lessons, though remaining below national expectations on balance, reflect the gains suggested by the school's assessments.

The teaching was satisfactory or better in all of the 18 lessons, including six where the quality was good and two very good. The eradication of unsatisfactory teaching, since the last inspection, is a welcome achievement; however, the small proportion of good and very good teaching is a concern, as it is preventing the pupils from making sufficiently consistent progress to bring about a rapid rise in standards. The quality of the pupils' learning matched the profile of teaching.

A reasonable proportion of the satisfactory teaching had good features, particularly in the variety of activities, which absorbed and motivated the pupils. However, the pace and demand of these lessons were not sustained, limiting their overall effectiveness. In the most successful lessons, the planning identified clear learning aims and made provision for a range of activities which were carefully matched to the pupils' differing attainment and needs. The lessons were well organised and built on previous learning. The teachers' expectations were high and they made explicit links with other subjects. There were examples of good questioning, encouraging the pupils to expand their responses and to use precise vocabulary.

Despite the senior managers' attention to improving the quality of planning to ensure more suitable challenge for the higher-attaining pupils, some weaknesses persist. The attainment in many classes spans at least three National Curriculum levels, yet on too many occasions all the pupils were set the same task and given the same resources. Differentiation was only apparent in the varied outcomes recorded for groups of pupils. However, there is good practice in some classes, which could serve as a model for all staff. The setting of some groups, across year groups, on the basis of their prior attainment is successfully matching the challenge of the work to the pupils' needs.

Many teachers used a variety of strategies to develop the pupils' use of talk to explore and clarify their ideas. The pupils are used to working with partners and in groups. This approach was used effectively to involve the pupils more actively in their learning during whole-class sessions. The teaching assistants made a valuable contribution to the pupils' discussions, sitting on the carpet with groups and encouraging a lively sharing of ideas.

Most teachers have developed positive and encouraging relationships with the pupils, who respond well. On a few occasions, the teachers allowed an over-emphasis on low-level lapses in behaviour to interfere with the pace of the lesson.

Marking is variable. At its best, it is focused on the agreed learning intentions, offers the pupils useful pointers for improvement and sets up a dialogue with the pupils. However, too much marking offers the pupils very limited feedback on their writing.

Procedures for the assessing the pupils' progress and using data to inform planning and interventions have improved. Class teachers keep comprehensive records, plotting the pupils' progress towards achieving their targets. There has been a sensible move to involve the pupils more directly in assessing their own work and most know the level which they are achieving and their targets for improvement. A register of more-able and highly-able pupils has been created, allowing these pupils' performance to be carefully monitored. In some classes, the individual targets for higher-attaining pupils are particularly useful, providing appropriate challenge and motivation.

The standard of display is generally good and sometimes very good. Most classrooms are well kept and they are often vibrant and stimulating learning environments. The support for literacy is mainly good, although there is some lack of attention to collecting and displaying subject-specific vocabulary.

The acting headteacher is providing stability for the school, prior to a permanent appointment being made. Working in partnership with the LEA, she has addressed unsatisfactory teaching. There has been a welcome resolution to outstanding staffing issues and the school is well placed to secure more stable staffing.

Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are being established. The senior managers and subject co-ordinators are developing their roles. There has been an appropriate programme of staff development, which has begun to tackle the weaknesses identified in the last inspection, particularly in relation to the needs of the higher-attaining pupils. There is a closer focus on developing the use of assessment information, which is promoting higher expectations of what the pupils can achieve. However, much development remains embryonic and has yet to make a consistent impact on raising standards. There is still a great reliance on the LEA; however, it is to the senior managers' credit that they have not allowed the temporary nature of their appointments to delay improvements.

The governing body has had two new members since the last inspection. There are link governors for each of the key areas for improvement. Overall, governors are keen to be further involved in the school and have begun to be better informed about the progress being made in the implementation of the action plan.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in all 18 lessons, including 14 where they were good, very good or excellent. Pupils are keen to learn and settle quickly to activities. They co-operate well with one another during tasks in lessons and when playing outside. Many talk confidently about their work and are keen to succeed. In some lessons, some of the girls' exuberance and

anxiety to answer questions was not sufficiently well channelled; they were allowed to dominate the class, preventing other pupils from reflecting on their answers. The quality of relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils is very good. Pupils behaved very well in the whole school assembly which made a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They participated responsibly to the time for reflection and enthusiastically to singing, the quality of which was good.

The LEA is giving good support to the school. Consultants have worked effectively with key staff, and recent monitoring of the school's progress by personnel from the LEA was appropriately rigorous, leading to pertinent points for development. There has however been a considerable time lag in the support for information and communication technology (ICT) becoming available, since the unsatisfactory provision for ICT was identified during the inspection in November 2004. The support from the consultant headteacher is valued by the school and is making a good contribution to the implementation of the action plan.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: improve the effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management have been largely evaluated above. The acting headteacher and the senior managers have worked with determination. They have accepted advice and support and recognised the urgency of bringing about improvement in teaching and standards. They have made sound progress in improving many aspects of provision. However, the degree of external support is substantial and there is no permanent headteacher to provide strategic leadership. Overall, progress with this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 2: raise pupils' attainment and achievement, particularly higher attaining pupils, in English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education

Standards in ICT and religious education were not evaluated on this inspection. Standards in lessons are rising steadily and the higher-attaining pupils are benefiting from greater challenge. The school's evidence about attainment at the end of the key stages is encouraging but has yet to be confirmed by the results of the national tests for 2005. Overall, progress is reasonable with this key issue.

Key Issue 3: improve teaching, learning, and assessment by meeting pupils' differing needs consistently

Teaching, learning and assessment have been evaluated above. Some lack of consistency in meeting the pupils' differing needs remains but overall progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key Issue 4: improve the balance of the curriculum so that there are frequent opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and for reception children to work outside

Planning for the Foundation Stage has been reviewed and frequent opportunities for the reception pupils to work outside have been identified. The pupils benefit from undertaking tasks, which are generally stimulating but it is not always clear that outside activities are adding something distinctive to the pupils' experiences.

There has been a sensible focus on ensuring that all the school's computers are functioning efficiently. New hardware has been purchased and the number of computers available for the pupils is satisfactory. There are sound plans for the co-ordinator to monitor planning in order to promote the use of ICT across the curriculum. Most staff are confident in their use of ICT and it is used creatively in some classes; for example, the pupils in Year 5 logged into live webcams in zoos, as part of an English lesson on whether elephants should be kept in captivity. The school has no interactive whiteboards or resources for data projection and this is holding back the development of ICT. Using a PowerPoint presentation on a laptop for a large class is unsatisfactory.

The school has made reasonable progress on this key issue.

Key Issue 5: ensure that the governors' annual report to parents includes statutory targets for pupils at the end of Year 6

The school has made good progress on this key issue. The annual report includes the required information.