

Preston Support Centre  
Ringway House  
Ringway  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR1 3HQ

**Direct Tel** 0800 389 5686  
**Direct Fax** 01772 565353/565299

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



6 June 2005

Mrs K Scott  
Headteacher  
Colgate Primary School  
Blackhouse Road  
Colgate  
Horsham  
West Sussex  
RH13 6HS

Dear Mrs Scott

### **Implementation of Colgate Primary School's Action Plan**

Following my visit to your school on 23 May 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 which have been designated by their section 10 inspection as having serious weaknesses. You will recall that 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 and removing the causes of the serious weaknesses.

During the visit I inspected five lessons or part lessons; attended an assembly; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with you and nominated staff on the areas for improvement identified in the section 10 inspection. I also examined a range of 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 deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and a representative from the LEA.

The school's immediate neighbourhood is generally favourable, but most pupils come from a much wider catchment area, including some who have experienced difficulties in nearby urban schools. There is a wide variation between numbers in each year group, leading to the necessity for mixed-age classes. A number of generally higher-attaining pupils leave the school at the end of Key Stage 1 to go to independent schools.

There have been significant changes since November 2004, when the school was judged to have serious weaknesses. A new headteacher took up her post in January 2005 and a number of teachers have left, or have resigned for the end of the academic year. Promising appointments have been made for September 2005, when the school should be wholly staffed with full-time teachers. The school was able to recruit new staff from a large field of applicants. The recent appointment of a teacher for the Foundation Stage has been very successful, accelerating progress for the youngest pupils and building a good base for future improvement. However, the legacy of past arrangements persists this term, with many pupils experiencing a large number of different teachers, including a number of temporary staff, who are in the school for a short time and have little knowledge of the pupils. This has an inevitable impact on standards and the pupils' attitudes to learning.

The pupils' standards of attainment are highly variable; too many are working below the expected levels because of the discontinuity of teaching which they have received. Many pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge, which hampers their progress and leads to a lack of confidence. The pupils in the Foundation Stage are achieving at least satisfactory standards because of effective planning and a relentless focus on their learning.

Many pupils have sound speaking skills; they are able to express their ideas confidently and clearly, often using a sophisticated vocabulary. More opportunities for the pupils to discuss and share their ideas have been planned and most pupils participate in these activities purposefully. The pupils' ability to listen well is less developed; too many are unable to listen with attention to each other or their teacher. Standards of writing are too low overall, although there are indications that the presentation of writing has begun to improve. There is more consistent use of joined, cursive handwriting. However, the technical accuracy of the pupils' writing is generally unsatisfactory and too many errors remain in work that has been marked.

The quality of the pupils' art work in classrooms and around the school is good. The pupils' work shows careful observation and a thoughtful and controlled execution of interesting and innovative tasks.

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in four out of the five lessons, including two that were good. In the weakest teaching, the management of the pupils' behaviour dominated the lesson so that they made minimal progress. The good teaching was characterised by high expectations and well-planned, stimulating activities. There was an emphasis on supporting the youngest pupils in developing independence and confidence. Planning generally addresses the needs of the mixed-age groups effectively and resources are well prepared to support the pupils. Key questions are identified for the concluding plenary session, to assess the pupils' learning, but the questions are not planned for specific groups of pupils, missing the opportunity to provide an additional element of challenge or support.

Procedures for target-setting and assessing the pupils' progress are being established but are still at an early stage of development. The older pupils are aware of their targets for literacy and numeracy but are not clear about their levels of attainment. Marking is not guided by a consistent approach across the school. Most marking is conscientious and offers the pupils encouragement, but fails to indicate what they have to do to improve or to meet their targets. Some books have not been marked for too long.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory in all five lessons, including two where they were good. However, this overall judgement masks some lack of application from groups within the classes. Some pupils showed a lack of enthusiasm at times; for example, the audible complaints from a class when they were set a written task. The vast majority of the pupils behaved very well in the assembly, showing interest and involvement in the bible story told by a visiting speaker.

Under the good and perceptive leadership of the newly appointed headteacher, the school has begun to make sound progress. The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and has taken decisive and appropriate action to tackle weak performance. There are appropriate plans to develop the deputy headteacher's role and strengthen the good contribution she has already made to recent improvements. Both the headteacher and deputy have undertaken lesson monitoring, including joint monitoring with LEA advisers and consultants. Judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate, providing teachers with good feedback on strengths and areas for development. The evidence from the school's monitoring is used well to review the impact of actions and identify the next steps for improvement. The headteacher has combined appropriate urgency with judicious management of a small staff team. She recognises the need to stage developments, embedding improvement securely before moving on. With a predominantly new staff team, this is a wise strategy. A well-designed programme of meetings and training is successfully building the teachers' understanding and capacity.

The school's action plan is satisfactory and outlines a comprehensive programme to address and eradicate the serious weaknesses. The plan is an accessible, working document, which is already being sensibly annotated to take account of developments. The quality of the LEA's statement and commentary is good. The LEA's evaluation of the school's plan is detailed and accurate, providing useful pointers for improvement. The LEA has provided well-targeted support for the school, which has been effectively tailored to meet its developing needs. Externally commissioned reviews have provided an accurate and detailed evaluation of the school's progress and helped to identify the next priorities for improvement.

As a result of better quality information from the headteacher, the governors are beginning to ask more searching questions about the school's performance. There has been good support from the LEA, which is building the capacity of the governing body to hold the school more rigorously to account.

## **Action taken to address the areas for improvement**

### **1: continue to address the serious weaknesses in provision in Class 1 with urgency**

The impact of the new appointment for this class has been discussed above. In addition to the improvement in the quality of teaching, the classroom for the youngest pupils has been very effectively developed, creating a vibrant and supportive environment, which is making an important contribution to improvements in the pupils' learning.

There has been good progress with this area for improvement.

### **2: improve the overall quality of teaching and learning**

Despite the good teaching for the youngest and oldest pupils, there is still too much teaching which is ineffective, or not good enough to enable the pupils to make the rapid gains which they need to overcome past weaknesses in provision. The headteacher understands the issues and her plans for the future are appropriate; nevertheless, the impact of this work has yet to be seen throughout the school and progress is limited.

### **3: use assessment and monitoring at all levels more effectively to improve achievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6**

Sound systems have been introduced to track and monitor the pupils' progress and this is improving planning, which is being appropriately adapted in the light of assessment information. There has been reasonable progress with this area for improvement.

#### **To meet statutory requirements, the governing body needs to:**

- **allocate a specific governor for literacy or numeracy; and**
- **include all required aspects in the prospectus and annual governors' report for parents**

Governors with responsibility for literacy and numeracy have been appointed. The school has produced a prospectus and annual report for parents which contain all the required aspects.

Reasonable progress has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the school's serious weaknesses. The school has a good capacity to bring about further improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Education and the Arts for West Sussex. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

**LOUISE SODEN**  
**HM Inspector of Schools**