



23 June 2005

Mrs G S Harrison
Headteacher
Ferring CE VC Primary School
Sea Lane
Ferring
Worthing
West Sussex BN12 5DU

Dear Mrs Harrison

Implementation of Ferring Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 20 and 21 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 nine lessons or part lessons; attended a registration period; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with yourself, nominated staff, the chair of governors and a representative of the LEA 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.

Following the school's inspection in March 2004, advisers from the LEA supported the school in developing the post Ofsted action plan. A draft of the plan was not completed until September 2004 and, due to significant omissions of which the LEA was unaware, it was judged to be unsatisfactory. A revised action plan, now known as the School Improvement Plan, was produced by the new headteacher who took up post in January 2005. It addresses all the key areas for improvement and fulfils all the criteria for a satisfactory school action plan, including measurable success criteria where appropriate. As a result of the initial problems prior to the

appointment of the present headteacher, there has been a considerable delay in addressing the areas for improvement. However, since the arrival of the new headteacher, there has been a concerted effort to rectify this, and the school has made remarkable progress in some areas.

The headteacher is giving strong leadership and has a clear understanding of the needs of the school and of what should be done to improve provision and practice and to raise standards. She has had a significant impact on the ethos of the school and the optimism of the staff. Reasonable progress has been made in addressing the need for a more proactive senior management team and in introducing a range of systems and procedures to facilitate improvements in teaching and learning. These changes are at an early stage of implementation and, although there is some good practice, consistency is not yet established throughout the school. The governors are becoming better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a result of improved communication. They are already monitoring the progress the school is making against the areas for development in the action plan. The teachers are responding very positively to the new leadership and the potential for continued improvement is strong.

Most of the senior management team, including core subject leaders, are keen and committed to working together to raise standards, and they have made a determined and constructive start. However, the role of the deputy headteacher is not sufficiently developed to support effectively the headteacher in carrying out her leadership tasks. With LEA support, monitoring within the school is developing well, particularly in relation to teaching and learning. The issues emerging from scrutiny of planning and the pupils' workbooks are shared with the staff and are being addressed. Issues identified from lesson observations have led to focused support for individual teachers, from the LEA and within the school, to improve their practice. Assessment and analysis of the pupils' attainment over time, however, are at an embryonic stage and leadership of this area has not been successful. Unsatisfactory progress has been made in addressing this issue. The school recognises this and has taken steps to rectify the situation, for example, through training and ensuring that there is an action plan with clear time scales for the assessment leader to implement.

The quality of teaching has improved. It was sound or better in eight of the nine lessons, although within two of the satisfactory lessons strengths and weaknesses were finely balanced. Teaching was good in three lessons and very good in two. The characteristics of the good and very good teaching included an enthusiastic and lively approach, and good questioning to elicit more complex and reflective responses from pupils and to assess their understanding. The best lessons were sharply focused in terms of objectives, planned outcomes and learning activities. Lessons were well paced and purposeful, and expectations of the pupils were appropriately high. In the two finely balanced lessons, although the teaching strategies had improved due to focused support, the pace of teaching and learning was not always sufficiently brisk and there was some lack of focus on what was required in the learning. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, the pace of teaching and

learning was pedestrian, management of the pupils was not wholly effective, no checks were made to assess whether the learning objectives were being achieved, and expectations of the pupils were too low.

Throughout the school there is evidence of improved planning, a greater understanding of what should be taught, better knowledge of the pupils' abilities, and a more adventurous and lively approach to teaching. There are increasing opportunities planned for the pupils to discuss their work in pairs and groups and this is having a direct impact on learning. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is sound, and efforts are made to address the needs of more able pupils within lessons. Some teachers do this well, but not all staff understand what constitutes an appropriate challenge for these able pupils, and there is a tendency to ask them to complete more work rather than to achieve at a higher level.

The standards the pupils attained at Level 2 and above in the 2004 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 were better than in the previous year, and were close to the national average in reading and writing but below in mathematics. Results in the most recent assessments show a decline, partly due to the increased numbers of pupils with special educational needs within the cohort. Standards in writing were particularly weak and fewer pupils attained Level 3 in all three subjects.

In the 2004 tests at the end of Key Stage 2, there was some improvement on the previous year in mathematics, but the results in English were lower and in science, fewer pupils gained Level 5. The outcomes of the most recent national tests are not yet available, but teacher assessments and other indicators would suggest that results for the present Year 6 pupils are likely to be much improved in English with a higher proportion of pupils achieving Level 5. In mathematics and science the results are expected to be similar to last year's. The targets set for these pupils are likely to have been reached at Level 4 and above in the three subjects, but at Level 5 the targets are not expected to be met.

In lessons, attainment was nearly always at the level expected for age, except in geography and science lessons in the mixed Years 3 and 4 classes. In all but one lesson, the pupils made at least satisfactory progress and in over half the lessons the pupils made good gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. The quality of teaching directly affected the quality of learning.

The response of the pupils to their learning was never less than satisfactory, even when the teaching was insufficiently demanding; in five lessons it was good and in two it was very good. Most of the pupils are keen, enthusiastic learners. They are attentive to the teacher, sustain concentration for suitable lengths of time and make efforts to do their work well. Many, including the youngest pupils, demonstrated that they were able to take responsibility for their own learning when given the opportunity. They were friendly and keen to share what they knew with teachers and visitors. Behaviour in classrooms and beyond was good. The pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is good.

As mentioned earlier, there were problems in the early stages in the response of the school to the section 10 inspection and to the support offered by the LEA. Since the arrival of the new headteacher in January, the school has welcomed the significant support given by the LEA. This has included intensive support for three teachers; training and advice in literacy and numeracy and in subject leadership; and guidance for the new headteacher in her leadership and management roles. The LEA has also made regular evaluations of progress against the key issues in the action plan. This input has contributed to the effectiveness of leadership, to improvements in the teaching of literacy and numeracy and to the classroom practice of those teachers given specific support; it has also helped to shape the work of core subject leaders.

Evaluation of Progress:

After a slow start, the school is now making reasonable progress towards raising 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 the key tasks which relate to the school's underachievement.

Agenda for further action to address underachievement:

- improve assessment procedures;
- address the learning needs of those pupils capable of high attainment;
- ensure that the deputy headship role is strengthened in order to provide effective support to the headteacher in her leadership and management roles.

This visit has raised some concerns, particularly about aspects of management, and the school's performance will be monitored.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Murrell
Additional Inspector

cc: chair of governors
LEA
diocese