



17 March 2006

Mrs. Sue Garland-Grimes
Associate Headteacher
Kelford School
Oakdale Road
Kimberworth
Rotherham
S61 2NU

Dear Mrs. Garland-Grimes

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF KELFORD SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 20 March 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in April 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

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, all members of the leadership team, three local authority (LA) representatives and two members of the governing body.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in November 2005, the associate headteacher has been supported at a strategic level by two of the LA's school improvement advisers. Discussions have taken place about the future leadership of the school including the possibility of a federation with the other two special schools in Rotherham. A meeting in April is planned to take forward these discussions. The governing body has delegated powers and the

LA has appointed additional governors. Plans are in hand between the governors and LA to gradually reduce the inherited deficit budget.

Achievement and standards

Considerable work has taken place since the last monitoring visit to focus on assessment for learning and to gain a clearer understanding of the achievement levels of individual pupils. The school is now in a position to provide up-to-date detailed data on pupils' attainment and is using this information carefully to analyse future priorities. The conclusions the school has drawn about pupils' progress are accurate and show inconsistencies in moderation of assessment judgements. The adoption of a published scheme to further support assessment does demonstrate more clearly the progress pupils make over time.

The overall improvements in pupils' progress are mainly linked to the comprehensive review of curriculum planning and the positive changes made to short and medium-term planning. A consistent approach now identifies the learning outcomes for individuals or groups of pupils and sets out clearly the means by which these will be achieved. An example of assessing in the classroom, at the time an activity is undertaken, shows how staff are beginning to use assessment information more smartly to improve learning.

A big step forward has been the speedy change of culture in most, although not all, classes, where teaching assistants support and plan with teachers to focus on achievement as opposed to care. The regular class team-meetings ensure this joint planning takes place and have contributed significantly to raising standards. The sensible appointment of personal care assistants has relieved other adults from focusing specifically on personal needs and so education and care are more in balance.

The key priorities identified by the leadership team to improve further the achievements of pupils are good. Appropriate training is in place to equip staff with the skills they need.

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

- improve the assessment and monitoring of pupil progress – good in terms of systems and satisfactory in terms of outcomes.

Personal development and well-being

The school's strategy for improving health and well-being is firmly embedded in the action plan based on the Healthy Schools Award. A number of excellent initiatives have started, for example: milk for younger children; availability of fresh fruit; a no smoking policy; and the promotion of healthy eating. Additionally, a dysphagia specialist has been appointed to assess eating and drinking programmes and provides training for staff on the implementation of swallowing plans for those children who require support.

Extra-curricular opportunities have been extended to include more appropriate healthy lifestyle activities for older students at lunchtime, and an enriching outdoor education programme is in place. The coordinator for personal, health and social education has reviewed this aspect of the curriculum based on Rotherham's guidance on healthy schools.

The extensive work undertaken to focus on the many health-and-safety issues not identified in April 2005 have been resolved. Although this was not an area not identified as requiring improvement, overall this is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has been kept under close scrutiny by the leadership team, with the support of an outside consultant. The monitoring records show a much improved profile with fewer inadequate lessons and a shift up to more that are satisfactory and good. This inspection confirms that profile. Targeted training and professional development on all types of planning, together with the focus on assessment for learning, have brought about this change. The re-grouping of a cohort of pupils with particularly challenging behaviour, together with some excellent teacher assistant support, has contributed to better teaching and learning for that group. The expectations of most teachers and teaching assistants are rising, with better matching of tasks to pupils' individual needs. The best teaching and learning shows significantly improved use of assessment to inform planning, improved use and availability of resources to capture attention and motivate, and a better impact from the involvement of teaching assistants in learning.

Nevertheless, in weaker lessons some common factors emerge. There remain inconsistencies in the use of alternate communication methods with insufficient use of sign or symbols to help those with no verbal language communicate effectively. Information and communication technology (ICT) is underused as a means of promoting learning. Adults do not always match

their language levels to the particular pupil or group and spend too long on information giving at the start and end of lessons. Consequently, there is too much passive learning and sitting for extended periods. A few classes are not well organised and the classroom management here requires improvement.

The curriculum now meets statutory requirements and the improvements in curricular planning can be seen by the progress made by pupils. The developments in planning can now be used by subject coordinators to begin to track progress in their subjects. This is the next priority for the school. The ASDAN Youth Award and Transition Challenge courses provide appropriate external accreditation for students.

Opportunities have been made available to enrich the curriculum, for example, some pupils attended the 'Get Sorted' music academy; pupils at Key Stage 4 are working with a local secondary school on a collaborative learning project; and a talent competition is taking place with another school. Additional lessons of physical education for gifted and talented pupils have been introduced and are raising standards for those taking part.

Considerable attention has been given to improving the care, advice and guidance for pupils and students whilst stressing the importance of academic progress. An increase in staffing levels directed at personal care has contributed to this better balance.

Each member of the leadership team takes responsibility for one of the outcomes in the national agenda, set out in 'Every Child Matters', and is supported in this by an allocated governor. Medical assessments are in place and a full-time nurse provides medical care. Positive handling plans are secure and behaviour management plans are in place although there are still inconsistencies in the implementation of these. Two child protection officers have robust systems for monitoring vulnerable pupils. A recent audit of pupils' needs has shown that many fall into this category.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, and staff expertise – satisfactory progress
- ensure the curriculum is fully taught, meets the needs of all pupils and has enough time for learning – good progress.

Leadership and management

The associate headteacher has given the school a new lease of life. She has provided a positive steer based on an accurate analysis of the school's needs and future direction. In so doing, she has developed senior leaders to become increasingly effective and this team is now driving up standards together. The LA's decision to second two of their school improvement advisers to support strategic management was crucial to bringing about change with the speed required. All have worked well together. A most obvious outcome of their work has been to raise morale significantly: in September 2005 staff absence was running at 33%; this term it has been reduced to 4%. This is a significant achievement and much-needed stability has emerged. Additionally, staff know what they have to do and most are giving of their best. Staff and pupils are happier and are working well together.

The headteacher, with support from senior leaders and input from all staff, has completed a draft school self-evaluation which provides an accurate analysis of current and future priorities. There is an increasingly effective system for monitoring and reviewing the school's work. Identified priorities are linked into the performance management process for teachers and by September 2006 will be similar for support staff.

Accommodation is improving with good facilities now secure for secondary and post-16 pupils and students. Although more resources were apparent on this visit there remains a lack of specialist equipment. The much-needed improvements to the primary department are in hand.

The governing body is fully constituted and has an increasing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Appropriate committees are now in place and are providing the strategic direction expected of a governing body. This has been helped by the substantial support of the LA. Governors are involved in developing a strategic plan for the future of the school and all decisions will be taken together with the LA.

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

- improve the leadership and management throughout the school, especially governance and financial management – good progress

External support

The LA's involvement with the school since the inspection in April 2005 continues to be of a high standard. Following a set-back in progress towards the end of the autumn term, due in part to the instability of staffing, the LA took immediate action and provided additional input from two school improvement advisers. This strengthened the school's capacity to bring about change more rapidly.

The LA keeps a close check on the school's progress and is fulfilling all its commitments in its statement of action. It works well with the governing body. They are jointly discussing the future management direction of the school in relation to its position with other schools in the LA. A decision is assured by the summer term.

An external consultant continues to provide effective evaluation of teaching and learning.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the application of the improved assessment arrangements to increase pupils' progress.
- Ensure greater consistency across the school in relation to teaching and learning, behaviour management and the use of alternative communication methods.
- Improve the use of ICT, particularly in relation to communication.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Visser

H M Inspector