



30 March 2006

Mrs H Flynn
The Acting Headteacher
Gatten & Lake Primary School
Howard Road
Shanklin
Isle of Wight
PO37 6HD

Dear Mrs Flynn

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GATTEN AND LAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Peter McGregor AI to your school on 14 and 15 March 2006, 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 October 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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held discussions with the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, and the co-ordinators with responsibility for leading and managing English and the foundation subjects. Discussions were also held with the attached inspector for the local authority (LA). The views of pupils were gathered informally. Inspectors observed 12 lessons or part lessons.

Context

The headteacher in post at the time of the last inspection resigned and left the school in February. The LA has secured the services of an experienced headteacher from another school. She has been at Gatten and Lake Primary

School since the February half term and is expected to remain as acting headteacher until the end of the summer term.

The governing body have decided to disband and have requested that the local authority set up an interim executive board.

Achievement and standards

The attainment of pupils when they begin school in the Reception class is just below average for their age. They make good progress in Reception, but there are inconsistencies in the quality of provision as pupils progress up the school. This is largely down to the lack of different work for the different ability groups of pupils in some classes, which is contributing to pupils making insufficient progress over time.

Strategies to raise the achievement of all pupils are very limited. Pupils, particularly the most capable, continue to underachieve. Pupils make insufficient gains in mathematics as well as in the development of their speaking and writing skills. Standards in Year 2 are particularly low; however, recent changes have led to improvements in the quality of provision. This in turn is leading, albeit slowly, to an increase in the rate of progress made by some pupils.

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

- Raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics - inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Staff provide a satisfactory level of pastoral care for pupils. The promotion of social and moral development is sound. Pupils are expected to be well behaved, polite and to listen courteously, and generally they do. However, pupils are not clear about the school's systems for rewards and sanctions and the lack of consistency amongst staff is unhelpful to pupils.

Opportunities for healthy living include a reasonably nutritious lunch, fruit provided at break and guidance for parents to produce healthy lunch boxes, but not all parents have heeded the advice. A school council has yet to be established, so pupils do not have a forum to voice their views about their education. Weaknesses in literacy and numeracy, and in the way data is used to help pupils do better, indicate that the academic care of pupils is

unsatisfactory. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good, enabling these pupils to be valued in the school community.

A number of health and safety issues have become apparent since the last inspection. These require attention so as not to compromise the well-being of adults and pupils. The school has not reviewed its child protection procedures since the departure of the previous headteacher.

Quality of provision

Although some helpful changes have taken place and the quality of the learning environment has improved, there has been inadequate progress overall in improving the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and assessment. In a short space of time the acting headteacher has developed a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Relationships between pupils and staff are good, which contributes to the pupils' good behaviour. Good teaching in the Foundation Stage has been maintained.

However, the quality of work elsewhere in the school is variable. Where it is weak, the work set for pupils is insufficiently challenging; teachers' expectations in English and mathematics, particularly for high attaining pupils, are too low. Introductions to lessons are often too long with too many pupils sitting passively. Insufficient opportunities are planned for pupils to develop their speaking skills by sharing and discussing ideas. This in turn restricts their progress as well as standards in writing. The pace of sessions during group work is often slow for those not being taught directly. There are insufficient strategies to engage all pupils in the assessment of their learning. The weaknesses in teaching contribute directly to pupils' underachievement.

Where teaching is good there is effective use of a range of visual aids and practical activities. Teachers make good use of questions to help them to assess pupils' level of progress, to extend pupils' learning and encourage pupils to use new vocabulary. In these lessons pupils are provided with good opportunities to share their views and explain the reasons for their answers. These lessons are well structured and ensure that pupils have sufficient time to complete their work.

Occasionally, satisfactory use is made of the available interactive whiteboards, but the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum to support teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.

Pupils' work is often merely 'ticked' with little if any acknowledgment of what pupils have learnt or how they can improve. How teachers assess pupils' work is inconsistent and lacks rigour; this is done well for pupils in Reception. A small proportion of work is levelled using National Curriculum criteria but, generally, pupils are not aware of the standards they are attaining. Data are being collected on pupils' achievements, such as their reading ages and writing levels. This has yet to be collated, interpreted and applied, to identify individual pupils' attainment and to set realistic, challenging targets. Teachers' understanding of how assessment should assist learning is weak and this is a barrier to improving levels of pupils' progress.

Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are taught for half an hour less per week than the time recommended nationally. Senior managers and subject leaders do not have a secure knowledge of when and for how long subjects are taught and what is taught under each subject's name. Managers cannot guarantee equality of opportunity or ensure that the curriculum has appropriate breadth and balance. Planning for literacy is improving, with a common weekly format recently introduced and a requirement that all pupils will be heard reading each week by their class teachers. Planning for mathematics and the foundation subjects lacks important detail. This results in weaknesses in continuity and progression in teaching and learning. Planning is unsatisfactory for the highest attaining pupils including those who are gifted and talented.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- Improve the teachers' use of assessment information to ensure all pupils are suitably challenged, particularly the more able pupils - inadequate progress

Leadership and management

The overall quality of leadership and management showed insufficient signs of improvement until after the February half term. The acting headteacher has not been at the school long enough for the school to have benefited sufficiently from her leadership. Nevertheless, since her arrival staff feel more purposefully led and some are beginning to feel more empowered to provide support and guidance to colleagues.

Since the school went into special measures two additional members of staff have joined the senior management team. The team has started to meet and is becoming more focused on teaching and learning. Although much still remains to be done they have worked with staff to improve the quality of the learning environment.

The school does not have a coherent line-management structure and roles and responsibilities are unclear. The lack of training and opportunities afforded to middle and senior managers in the past has resulted in their roles being severely underdeveloped. As a result, they do not provide sufficient guidance and direction about how to raise achievement in their areas of responsibility. Co-ordinators do not produce action plans and do not have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in their respective areas of responsibility. The use of data at a management level is still an area of weakness. The school does not yet have systems in place to evaluate its own effectiveness.

The recent health and safety monitoring visit, which was instigated by the acting headteacher, has identified continuing shortcomings in the management of the premises and in relation to aspects of health and safety.

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

- Implement rigorous self-evaluation procedures that will enable the school to identify and implement appropriate targets for improvement - inadequate progress

External support

The local authority is providing the school with effective support. The attached inspector now provides weekly support for the school. Two members of the Primary Strategy team have been working alongside class teachers to help improve the quality of teaching. However, some of the key staff at the school are unclear about the roles of the different LA officers in the school and the focus for their visits. Some teachers are also not sufficiently familiar with the Primary National Strategy and how this can help to improve their practice.

The link inspector has worked hard with the school to produce a detailed post - Ofsted action plan. However, the staff have not contributed to the plan and as a result they do not have ownership of it. This is reducing the potential of the plan to help guide the school towards making the required improvements.

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory. The school's post- Ofsted action plan includes much of the LA's proposed action. The plan incorporates all the areas for improvement. However, the key issues have been re-worded and in some cases broken down without providing the original key issues as headings. Nevertheless, the plan includes intended outcomes, proposed actions, start and target dates as well as review dates and success indicators. Those responsible for ensuring actions take place are clearly listed and the resources required to implement the plan have been identified.

However, the success criteria in the section entitled *'improving the quality of teaching to raise standards'* makes insufficient use of quantifiable targets for all year groups. There is also insufficient reference to the Primary National Strategy, for example promoting 'talk for learning' and pupils participating in the assessment of their own learning during lessons.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed until further notice.

Priorities for further improvement

- The school needs to ensure that it complies fully with all health and safety and legal requirements.
- Leaders and managers at all levels need to develop their leadership roles.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Senior Education Officer for the Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
H M Inspector