



15 March 2006

Mrs Irene Cleaver  
The Headteacher  
Athelney Primary School  
Athelney Street  
London  
SE6 3LD

Dear Mrs Cleaver

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ATHELNEY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with David Hornbrook HMI to your school on 2 and 3 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 September 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 met with the headteacher, the chair of governors, a representative of the Local Authority, (LA), a subject leader, the school leadership team and held discussions with pupils.

### **Context**

An interim headteacher has been in post since 31 October 2005 and is contracted to the school until 31 August 2007. A key member of the leadership team is currently absent. The school continues to enjoy the confidence of parents and the local community and has not lost any pupils as a result of being placed in special measures.

## **Achievement and standards**

In the 2005 national tests standards by the end of Year 2 fell in reading, writing and mathematics and were significantly lower than the national average. Standards overall have been significantly lower than average in each of the last five years. Standards in writing remain very low. By the end of Year 6, although standards rose in 2005, they remain significantly lower than average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics is particularly low. Progress overall was significantly lower than one might expect, and has been for each of the past three years. While progress in lessons is generally at least satisfactory standards remain too low.

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

- Raise standards in English, particularly in writing, mathematics and science by improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school – inadequate progress

## **Personal development and well-being**

At the time of the last inspection pupils' behaviour was judged to be satisfactory. In lessons behaviour was generally good. Pupils behave well during breaks and when moving around the school and are usually courteous to visitors. Agreed class rules are prominently displayed and teachers are consistent in their expectations. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their work and there are high levels of participation in the majority of lessons. Pupils are enthusiastic, keen to learn and responsive to teachers' questions. Discussions are focused and productive. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good.

The school has an attendance target which is close to the LA average. However, attendance in 2004/05 was 92.8% and there has been little improvement since then. Unauthorised absence remains above the national average. The school analyses data systematically, contacts parents on the first day of absence and is working closely with the LA to improve attendance rates. The school is in the process of identifying possible links between attendance and achievement. Pupils' punctuality is unsatisfactory. This is largely because a small number of younger pupils are persistently late. There are appropriate arrangements for managing exclusions. Since the inspection, three pupils have been excluded for a fixed-term. Appropriate support is given to excluded pupils and there is close liaison with the LA.

Assemblies are well planned and emphasise the school's moral, spiritual and social values. Pupils are encouraged to express their views and opinions and there are good opportunities for pupils to share what they have achieved in lessons. In Key Stage 1, pupils experience a good balance of reflection and celebration, together with an opportunity to sing and pray together. Assemblies are also occasions where pupils' achievements outside school are recognised and celebrated.

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. It is satisfactory overall and some is outstanding. Where teaching is good pupils know what they are expected to learn and why. Activities are well matched to their needs. In these lessons pupils are encouraged to discuss their work which helps them better understand what they are doing. Outstanding teaching uses a range of questioning styles to keep all pupils enthusiastic and interested and to assess how well they are learning. The school should continue to focus on ensuring all teaching is as good as the best. Most lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives and work which meets the needs of all learners. Adults other than teachers are generally well used and support teaching and learning well. Where lessons are less successful the work is too easy and there is insufficient focus on the core skills.

Classrooms are stimulating and well-organised, with a range of posters and other resources. Displays are attractive and designed to enhance learning. There are examples of good practice for pupils to learn from and the progress of classes towards their targets is prominently displayed. Corridors are bright and lively and are well used to celebrate pupils' work which is well mounted and annotated and often of high quality.

Some progress has been made on the use of assessment data since the inspection. Baseline tests in November 2005 have been followed up with half-termly testing to assess progress. There has been some improvement in achievement and the progress of each class towards its targets is prominently displayed in classrooms. A new computerised system allows teachers and managers rapid access to data and they are beginning to use it to plan lessons and target resources where they are most needed to tackle underachievement. Most pupils know their targets but are less sure how they will know when they have achieved them. Marking is regular and supportive

but does not always tell pupils how to improve their work and does not consistently make reference to learning objectives or pupils' targets.

The curriculum is well-balanced with appropriate coverage of the core and foundation subjects with good attention given to art and music. Years 5 and 6 are now divided into three ability sets for mathematics and writing and this is beginning to have an impact on the progress of pupils of all abilities.

The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs in classes is good.

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

- Make better use of assessment information to match teaching more closely to pupils' needs, so they all make the progress expected of them – satisfactory progress.

## **Leadership and management**

The capacity of the school's management and leadership team to secure improvement is good. The management responsibilities of the leadership team have been clearly defined. They now have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are well placed to help secure continuing improvement.

The newly appointed interim headteacher is providing good leadership with a clear focus on raising standards. She rightly identified the need to clarify management structures and responsibilities and empower the leadership team. Senior leaders now have a better understanding of the importance of ensuring pupils achieve high standards.

With the help of the LA the leadership team has begun to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning through a programme of lesson observations and the provision of useful feedback to teachers. This allows them to recognise where their teaching is good and where further improvements are needed. The school has begun to collate and analyse findings from lesson observations in order to identify and address common weaknesses across classes. It is also beginning to link this information to other data such as that on pupil behaviour and the results of pupil perception surveys in order to map the impact of teaching and learning across the school.

The school has a full complement of governors who provide good support. They are now well informed by the headteacher so are better placed to understand how well the school is doing and hold the leadership team to account for standards and progress with the school improvement plan. The school improvement plan is satisfactory overall and has an appropriate focus on the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards. The plan contains generally appropriate actions which are linked to named members of the leadership team. The plan can be improved by ensuring success criteria are more explicit and where appropriate are linked to measurable outcomes and targets.

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

- Improve the leadership and management so that the school's weaknesses are tackled decisively by focusing sharply on raising attainment and systematically evaluating the impact of the actions taken - satisfactory progress
- Improve the ways that the governing body evaluates the school's work and holds it to account - good progress

### **External support**

Support from the LA is satisfactory. The newly appointed interim headteacher has been seconded from the LA advisory service and is providing good leadership. The school has valued the support of the link school improvement officer and LA consultants through the School Recovery Group. It has also been well supported by the consultant from the Sage Education Trust. The governing body have received appropriate support.

While the LAs statement of action is generally satisfactory it is not sufficiently consistent with the recently written school improvement plan and this needs to be addressed. In addition, the plan contains too few measurable success criteria that are closely linked to pupils' progress and attainment.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory progress

Quality of LA's statement of action – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the attendance and punctuality of pupils

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Executive Director of Children & Young People Services for Lewisham.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett  
**H M Inspector**