



30 January 2006

Mrs Loraine Mountain
The Headteacher
St Anthony's Roman Catholic Primary
School
Genoa Road
Anerley
London
SW20 8ES

Dear Mrs Mountain

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST ANTHONY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Carmen Rodney HMI to your school on 23 and 24 January 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 May 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, senior staff, the Chair of Governors and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been significant changes in staffing since the school was inspected in May 2005. Several staff have left and new appointments have been made. The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the promotion of the assistant headteacher to the role of Acting Deputy Headteacher.

Achievement and standards

In the summer term 2005, the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 1 were well below those achieved nationally and were lower than those achieved in the previous year, particularly in reading and mathematics. Very few pupils achieved the higher Level 3 in reading or mathematics and none achieved Level 3 in writing.

At the end of Key Stage 2, there was an improvement in English, a drop in Mathematics and a sharp decline in Science. The progress pupils made between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 was good in English, achieving closer to the national average in that subject.

Standards were satisfactory in just over half the lessons seen. In some of the weaker lessons, standards were below and sometimes well below the expectation for the pupils' ages. Although progress in most lessons was satisfactory, it was rarely better, particularly for the more able pupils. Tasks for lower attaining pupils were matched to their needs and prior attainment but there was not enough challenge for more able pupils.

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

- raise standards throughout the school, giving priority to English and mathematics – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

The school's behaviour policy is currently being reviewed and a range of strategies intended to improve behaviour have been introduced. For instance, a staggered break and lunch time is in place; the playground is supervised and there are more activities for the pupils. Learning mentors provide additional support for pupils with the most challenging behaviours and a unit has been set up for those at risk of exclusion. An innovative whole school project, Social, Emotional, Aspects and Learning (SEAL) has been introduced and has created an opportunity for all classes to explore their behaviour and attitudes to their work and each other. The pupils who have challenging behaviour are involved in setting and monitoring their personal targets and further work is planned to link behaviour management to the reward system. The school reports that the pupils are responding well to these initiatives. However the impact has not been evaluated.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in 14 of the 17 lessons; they were unsatisfactory in three and good in seven. Where there was very good classroom management and the teaching was effective, the pupils responded well; they were attentive, involved in their learning, respectful to the teacher, took responsibility for their work and handled resources with care. In all of the unsatisfactory lessons and in some of those judged to be satisfactory overall, expectations of good work and behaviour were not well established and low level disruption was evident. This took the form of off task chatter, fidgeting and being inattentive. As a result, a small, but significant minority did not take pride in their work and displayed a nonchalant attitude to learning. This hindered their concentration and progress. The school's behaviour management policy is not yet being implemented consistently.

The pupils' behaviour around the school, in corridors and in the playground at break and lunch times is generally acceptable, although occasionally, some pupils are over boisterous. However, the pupils generally mix well together and are polite and helpful to visitors.

The pupils' attendance last year was 91.7%. This is well below the national average for primary schools and has declined over the last three years. Attendance during this inspection was 91.1% on the first day and 87.9% on the second. The school reports that a stomach illness caused unusual levels of absence amongst pupils and staff. Punctuality at the start of the day was satisfactory. There was one fixed term exclusion last term.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved slightly but some of the issues relating to teaching and learning identified by the inspection in May 2005 remain and too many lessons are unsatisfactory. The teaching was at least satisfactory in 13 of the 17 lessons. It was good in 2 and unsatisfactory in 4.

Common features of the most effective lessons included: clear learning objectives which the teachers explored with the pupils and reviewed at the end of the lessons; good use of demonstration; lively teaching and involvement of the pupils in their work particularly when using ICT to enhance learning; close questioning and thorough review of previous learning. Although work was mostly matched to the pupils' ability, there was scope to extend the more able. The teachers had good classroom

management skills and were able to establish a purposeful learning environment. The pupils received good individual or group support, and feedback was used effectively and regularly to extend their communication skills and assess their grasp of the subject being studied.

The unsatisfactory lessons were not well structured and expectations of what the pupils could achieve both in relation to the quality and quantity of their work were too low, and there was too little rigour in the assessment of their learning. The learning objectives, though mostly precise, were not well matched to the pupils' differing needs and attainment. Teaching assistants occasionally dominated group activities and did not always manage low level disruption effectively. Teachers occasionally used praise inappropriately when the pupils produced too little or mediocre work. The quality and frequency of marking were too varied; feedback was unsatisfactory and gave very little advice on how work could be improved.

The standard of the pupils' learning was closely matched to the quality of teaching. However, in too many lessons the pupils made insufficient progress. Learning was impeded when the pace was slow and there was too much reliance on worksheets. Most pupils were keen to learn but many were easily distracted and lacked the confidence to take responsibility for their work. The pupils' work was often poorly presented.

The school has reviewed its assessment policy and now has clear guidelines for monitoring and tracking the pupils' progress. The teachers are beginning to have access to a wide range of assessment information from termly tests in English, maths and science, and intervention programmes. Additionally, there are plans to improve the quality of moderation. The use of this information to effectively identify and tackle underachievement is still at an early stage of development.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, and increase the rate of pupils' progress - inadequate progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has taken a number of suitable actions since the inspection in May 2005 and has introduced a range of strategies for monitoring and evaluation, including regular lesson observation and scrutiny of teachers'

plans and the pupils' work. Senior leaders have undertaken joint observations to ensure consistent judgements. Feedback with developmental points has been given after teachers have been observed and issues for development followed up. A schedule of staff development is in place with a programme of professional training linked to the priorities for improvement. The headteacher and governors, supported by the leadership team and the LA have effectively tackled some of the underperformance identified in the previous inspection report. They have successfully sharpened the focus on teaching and learning, and raising standards. The areas for improvement are extensive and many aspects have been tackled in a short time. Some of the required improvements are not yet fully embedded in all lessons and there is an urgent need to develop greater consistency and to raise the expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Subject leaders are developing a good understanding of their responsibilities and are benefiting from the input of LA consultants and advisors. The school action plan is detailed, identifies measurable success criteria and has a clear timescale with many of the actions having being initiated last term. Although start dates are included in the plan, there is no timescale to indicate when improvements are expected to be fully in place or their impact evaluated. Whilst monitoring and evaluation are distinct and suitably involve the governing body and the LA, the action plan does not set high enough aspirations for the quality of teaching and the attainment of different groups of pupils.

The governors have set up an action committee with the specific function of monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the progress against the post Ofsted action plan. Governors regularly visit the school and have undertaken appropriate training to help them develop a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

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

- improve the headteacher's leadership and establish effective management of the school - satisfactory progress
- establish effective strategies for supporting the pupils academic achievements - satisfactory progress

External support

The LA is providing a high level of support and challenge which is a well coordinated and coherent response to the school's areas for development. The LA statement of action has a number of good features such as its close alignment with the school's plan and carefully targeted support.

The plan and accompanying commentary makes it clear how the effectiveness of the implementation of the school's improvement plan will be monitored and evaluated. Although not indicated in the plan, the LA has a clear strategy to evaluate whether the headteacher and the school are able to sustain improvement with diminishing levels of intervention.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Quality of LA's statement of action – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement:

- Improve the quality of marking and use of assessment information to raise attainment;
- Increasing the proportion of good and better teaching by ensuring that teachers' expectations are raised and work is pitched to reflect pupils' needs and provide challenge;
- Ensure that the senior leadership maintain the focus on raising standards by sharper evaluation and identification of the key priorities for further development;
- Ensure there is a consistent approach to managing low level disruption so that learning is more effective.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Roman Catholic Diocese for Southwark and the Director of Education for Bromley.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald
H M Inspector