



13 July 2006

Mr Sean Connor
The Headteacher
Siskin Junior School
Nimrod Drive
Rowner
Gosport
PO13 8AA

Dear Mr Connor

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SISKIN JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Patricia Walker, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 July 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 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 including 9 lessons, 1 registration and 1 assembly, scrutinised documents, met with a range of staff, a representative group of pupils, the school council, a governor representative and advisers from the local authority.

Context

As at the time of the previous visit there is an acting deputy headteacher in post. The new deputy headteacher who takes up this post in September was present in the school during the two days of the visit. One member of the teaching staff has left the school since the last visit. Due to the recent

resignation of the chair of governors this post is not currently filled. A meeting is to take place very shortly to appoint a new person to this position.

Achievement and standards

The school has recently received the results obtained by current Year 6 pupils in the Key Stage 2 national tests. These indicate that standards in English, mathematics and science have remained well below the national average and the school's own targets. Many pupils have underachieved during their time at the school and the overall progress made by pupils is inadequate.

The school's effective tracking system indicates a more positive but still inconsistent picture of pupil progress in year groups lower down the school. The progress made by pupils is closely linked to the quality of teaching they receive. Internal test results indicate that pupils in Year 5 are now making satisfactory progress in English and mathematics although standards remain below the national average. This view was supported by lesson observations during this visit. The progress of pupils in Years 3 and 4 is improving although is still below expected levels. Standards in these years remain below the national average.

The achievement of pupils in all year groups is stronger in reading than writing. The presentation of written work is also often untidy and lacks sufficient care. Detailed analysis of performance in mathematics tests indicates weaknesses in the pupils' knowledge of shape and space. The school is developing strategies to address these issues.

Although there is evidence that achievement and standards are beginning to rise due to improving teaching this is not yet sufficiently consistent across the school.

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

- Raise standards of achievement in all subjects with a specific focus on basic skills – inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Since the last monitoring visit pupils' behaviour in lessons has improved in response to an improvement in the quality of teaching and a more consistent application of the school's behaviour strategy. Behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime remains similar to that seen at the previous visit and there is still some way to go before the school offers pupils a calm and settled environment outside of lessons. Although there has been satisfactory

improvement in pupils' overall behaviour and attitudes since the last visit, their personal development remains inadequate.

Lessons in general are more structured and orderly although there remains in some an unacceptable amount of low level disruption. Pupils understand the behaviour that is expected of them in class and in general try to meet them. They appreciate the opportunity to earn "golden time" and other recognitions of good behaviour and effort. This rewards system is having a positive influence on behaviour and attitudes. Incidents of more serious misbehaviour in lessons have been reduced and are now rare. When they do occur they are dealt with swiftly and without fuss.

During lunch and breaktimes there remains some incidents of aggressive behaviour which threatens the safety of pupils. Some pupils also still speak with concern about bullying. The school has increased supervision at lunch and breaktimes to address this issue and pupils feel that this has helped. However, staff do not always deal with incidents in a consistent way and pupils do not feel confident that they will receive the same level of help from all adults working in the school. The seriousness with which these incidents should be regarded is therefore not always clearly demonstrated to pupils.

Since the last visit the school has established a school council with representatives from all year groups. The pupils appreciate the fact that they now have the opportunity to voice their views and opinions in a more formal setting.

The rate of attendance has continued to decline since the previous visit and is currently lower than it was a year ago. The school has continued to concentrate its efforts on the small number of pupils with the lowest attendance rate while not doing enough to raise the attendance of those with just below average attendance. There has been some success with the class attendance competition, particularly in raising awareness of the importance of regular attendance. There has not yet been enough done to convince parents of the advantages of regular attendance of their children, who are sometimes kept away from school inappropriately.

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

- Improve the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning – satisfactory progress.
- Improve rates of attendance – inadequate progress.

Quality of provision

The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last visit, however, inconsistencies still remain and too many inadequate lessons were observed. In lessons which are satisfactory or better pupils know what they are expected to learn. There is clear planning to meet the needs of groups of pupils of differing abilities. This planning enables most pupils to make at least satisfactory progress and in some cases good progress. Interesting activities and effective questioning are also used to engage and motivate pupils. When teaching is less effective there is insufficient provision for pupils of different abilities. As a result some pupils are not engaged either because they can not cope with the task set or because they find the task too easy. Consequently, the pace of learning is too slow and progress is limited for a significant number of pupils.

The effectiveness of teaching assistants (TA) also varies. In most lessons they are active in supporting pupils throughout the lesson. However, in a few lessons TAs are not deployed effectively.

The school continues to put a great deal of effort and a high priority on offering additional care and support to pupils who are identified as needing it, helping them to cope with the problems which face them. The school also works well with a range of agencies in order to meet the needs of pupils in its care. Systems for tracking the needs and progress of such pupils have been developed well and are thorough, providing clear information. Marking is regular and supportive. Pupils now have a better understanding of their own progress and what they need to do to improve. Teachers make use of the good tracking records to set appropriate targets for individual pupils. Most pupils are aware of their levels of attainment and their learning targets in literacy and numeracy, however, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

The school's last inspection report identified weaknesses in care related to risks arising from pupils' unacceptable behaviour. Behaviour in lessons has improved since the last visit, however, the level of unacceptable behaviour at lunch and breaktimes remains the same.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment procedures – satisfactory progress.
- Improve the quality of care – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has focused the school on improving pupils' achievement. A good system of pupil target setting and monitoring progress towards targets has been introduced. The data provided by this system is proving to be very useful in raising levels of expectation and identifying areas of underachievement. The headteacher has a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and self-evaluation strategies are being developed to involve middle leaders more effectively in this process.

Good plans for strengthening the leadership team next year have been developed with the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and two new team leaders. There is also growing capacity at middle leadership level within the school. This is particularly evident in numeracy where teaching plans have been rewritten, pupil progress is carefully monitored and appropriate intervention identified. However, the overall quality of middle leadership remains variable.

The school is monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, however, this monitoring lacks sufficient rigour in order to ensure consistency of practice across the school. This is an issue that the school needs to rapidly address.

The school has a detailed strategic plan which tackles the areas of weakness identified by the last inspection. This plan has clear success criteria that are focussed on improving pupil learning. Each term the school writes a raising achievement plan that clearly specifies the actions that it intends to take in order to achieve these stated success criteria. The implementation and impact of this plan are carefully monitored by the leadership team and the local authority.

The governing body has undergone significant change and development since the time of the last inspection. It continues to monitor the implementation and impact of the strategic plan and is clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body is developing its role of challenging as well as supporting the leadership team effectively.

Leadership and management have improved since the last visit and good plans are in place to further strengthen this area of the school. However, the overall capacity to raise standards and achievement significantly still remains to be demonstrated.

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

- Strengthen and develop the roles and impact of senior and middle managers as well as that of governors – satisfactory progress.
- Develop robust systems of self evaluation, which identify weaknesses and the necessary strategies to bring about improvement – satisfactory progress.
- Ensure the success criteria are sharply focused on improving the rate of pupils' progress and raising standards – satisfactory progress.

External support

Support from the local authority is satisfactory. A wide range of leadership and management and subject specific support has been provided to the school. This has helped develop the school's capacity for self evaluation and improvement. A local authority strategy group monitors the implementation and impact of the school's and local authority's action plan and also co-ordinates and monitors the impact of support.

The local authority has plans to provide further leadership support to the school next year in order to strengthen the school's strategic leadership capacity.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the rigour of monitoring teaching and learning to ensure greater consistency of best practice across the school.
- Improve the quality of care and supervision of pupils at break and lunchtimes.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children Services for Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson
H M Inspector