



14 July 2006

Mr Tony Markham
The Headteacher
Herne Junior School
Love Lane
Petersfield
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Dear Mr Markham

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HERNE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Susan Rogers and Philip Mann 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, scrutinised documents and held discussions with the seconded headteacher, the deputy headteacher, heads of year and the co-ordinators for assessment and special educational needs. Discussions were also held with the chairperson of the governors' finance committee, the attached inspector and the local authority school improvement manager. The views of pupils were gathered informally and through a meeting with the school's young governors. Inspectors observed 16 parts of lessons and one assembly.

Context

The seconded headteacher began working in the school on January 3rd 2006. He was appointed initially to provide support and leadership for the school

until Easter. However, as a result of the substantive headteacher's resignation this period has been extended until the end of the autumn term.

The Governing Body has conducted a selection procedure for a headteacher but decided not to appoint. A second recruitment process is underway.

Achievement and standards

When pupils enter the school in Year 3, overall levels of attainment are above average. The progress that pupils make as they move through the school remains inconsistent. Expectations of what pupils can achieve continue to be too low in some year groups and subjects. Pupils in Years 4 and 6 make better progress because levels of challenge are much higher. This is confirmed by some improved provisional results in this year's national tests, particularly in English where targets were exceeded. Targets set for pupils in mathematics were not achieved. However, there is evidence that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in mathematics lessons.

Assessment information is used more effectively to monitor the achievements of pupils in English and mathematics and raise teachers' expectations. Individual targets are set for all pupils in these subjects. Discussions with pupils confirm that they welcome this initiative and find these targets very useful in helping them to succeed in their writing and number work.

The school has developed a better understanding of how targets can be used to raise standards but practice is inconsistent.

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

- Make sure that targets for improvement are easily measurable and checked for their effectiveness in enhancing pupils' progress – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being continue to be good. They enjoy working in pairs or small groups where they display good social skills and a sense of maturity. The Young Governors group of pupils continues to meet regularly with staff. They value being part of the school's drive for improvement and recognise that things are getting better. This involvement also contributes to their understanding of citizenship.

Target setting in English and mathematics has been well received by pupils. Some feel they are learning more because they are clearer about what to do next to improve. The initiative is helping pupils to develop their capacity to be independent in their learning.

Whilst most pupils enjoy coming to school, they find some lessons lacking in interest and too long. Consequently, they find it difficult to maintain their levels of concentration.

Attendance and punctuality continue to be good.

Quality of provision

Sixteen parts of lessons were observed, five were judged to be good, five were satisfactory and six were judged to be inadequate. The school's self-evaluation supports the view that teaching is still inadequate.

The teaching of basic skills has improved. The work undertaken to improve practice in mathematics has been effective. A focus on the teaching of reading has led to pupils making better progress. Workshops for parents in reading and mathematics have received positive feedback. The combined impact of these actions is reflected in the judgements made about the teaching and learning that was inspected. All the lessons seen in English and mathematics were at least satisfactory and some were good. Progress in these subjects is improving but there are still too many pupils who are not sufficiently stretched in their learning.

Staff are working hard to improve the coherence of the curriculum. There is a new curriculum overview with opportunities for cross-curricular links. Revised mid-term planning in all subjects is not always resulting in effective planning for learning in lessons. This is a key weakness with too many staff failing to structure learning through the use of objectives and activities that match pupils' needs, or to evaluate learning with sufficient rigour to challenge pupils' thinking.

Where teaching is effective, teachers' plans include a variety of activities that help pupils to achieve appropriately challenging objectives. Expectations are high. Positive relationships support learning. Teaching is lively, energetic and engaging. Pupils are required to push their thinking to a higher level. In these lessons teachers sustain a rapid pace by skilful questioning and cleverly planned activities. This good practice is yet to be embedded in all subject

areas. Weaknesses remain, even in lessons that are satisfactory overall. Work sometimes lacks sufficient pace. Teachers do not make good use of assessment information to plan for learning and some lesson objectives are so broad as to lack any meaning in terms of the next learning steps for pupils. Teaching is not responsive to the needs of pupils and marking does not give clear guidance to pupils about what they must do to improve.

Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities remains satisfactory. The effectiveness of learning assistants is variable. When planning is shared with them and they are clear about the objectives of lessons, they are able to help pupils learn and accelerate their progress.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching, ensuring that teachers' use assessment information accurately to provide work that meets pupils' differing needs especially in English and mathematics – inadequate progress.
- Revise curriculum guidance to give teachers more help in planning and evaluating their lessons and to make better use of time – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The uncertainty surrounding the long term leadership of the school and the reluctance of some to accept that the school requires special measures has resulted in time being lost, to the detriment of pupils' progress. However, leadership and management are now strengthened. Governance is clearly satisfactory. Overall, the leadership of the senior team is satisfactory. The seconded headteacher has won the confidence and trust of staff. He has led staff and governors in the creation of a whole school improvement plan. The plan is informed by a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. It sets out clear and appropriate strategies that are beginning to make a positive impact in some areas. A focus on pupils' learning is central to the plan but does not have a sharp enough emphasis on securing a consistent understanding of what effective learning is. Not all staff fully appreciate their responsibility to secure and accelerate pupils' learning.

The roles and responsibilities of staff have been reviewed and clarified. Teams are working together more effectively. Those with key responsibilities are more confident about carrying through the actions required for further improvement. Leaders who have been frustrated by a lack of direction now feel that a shared set of intentions is taking the work of the school forward.

They have been supported by some effective training with additional training scheduled in the future.

More rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have been devised and are being implemented. These include regular lesson observations and reviewing the curriculum to ensure that programmes of learning are covered in a coherent way. There is further work to do in both embedding new systems in practice and extending the work that is underway.

Governors have a sound idea of the school's strengths and priorities. They are assuming their role in challenging the school as well as in supporting it. This is helping to move the school forward more quickly. Leaders are aware that capacity to improve is constrained by the slow response of a few in grasping the importance of developing consistent practice. Appropriate plans are in place to address this issue. Leaders, governors and the local authority (LA) will want to demonstrate that these are carried through with rigour, clarity and determination.

A culture of openness where an exchange of views is welcomed is growing in the community of the school. The important partnerships with parents and the LA are stronger and increasingly positive.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, ensuring that the school establishes a clear sense of direction through its school improvement plan – satisfactory progress.

External support

Support from the local authority (LA) is now effective. The school improvement manager enhances the capacity for improvement by providing a good balance of challenge and support to the leadership of the school. The work of LA consultants and advisers is helping to improve pupils' progress.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures is inadequate.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection is satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed until further notice.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve planning and assessment for learning at all levels.

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

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
H M Inspector