



4 July 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 Mike Milton, Additional Inspector, to your school on 27 and 28 June 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, spoke to pupils, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the headteacher, assessment team, core subject leaders, the chair of governors and a representative of the Local Authority, (LA).

Context

There have some been changes to staffing since the last monitoring inspection, with new teachers in two classes. The school has successfully used the introduction of teaching, learning and retention points to restructure middle management into key stage based teams. Two assistant headteachers

have been appointed from within the school and will begin working in their new posts from September 2006.

Achievement and standards

Because the quality of teaching has improved, standards across the school have risen since the last monitoring inspection. In the Year 2 national assessments, while standards are likely to remain below average, they have risen in reading, writing and mathematics. However, not enough pupils are achieving the higher level 3. At the time of the inspection only the results of the Year 6 national tests for mathematics were available. These show that by the end of Year 6 standards in mathematics have risen at both Level 4 and the higher Level 5. These results match the school's realistic target at Level 4 but are below the target for Level 5. The school's own data indicates that pupils are making good progress in most classes although there is some underachievement in Years 3 and 5, particularly in writing and mathematics. The school monitors the progress of individual pupils and vulnerable groups well. This careful assessment of progress and regular meetings between groups of teachers has enabled the school to identify pupils who are falling behind and begin to take remedial action.

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 – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour was good at the time of the first monitoring inspection in March 2006 and remains good overall, with outstanding behaviour in some lessons. Because of the good support vulnerable pupils receive and the good partnership between home and school the number of exclusions has fallen and there have been none since the last monitoring inspection. Pupils and teachers are very positive about the recently introduced and highly visible 'card' system to improve behaviour. They say they like its consistency and transparency which means that pupils are clear about sanctions and rewards. Because teaching is improving, pupils enjoy learning, have positive attitudes and answer enthusiastically. Pupils have very positive relationships with adults in the school and show great consideration towards each other in lessons. The school is aware that at present some older pupils find it difficult to sustain good relationships during the long lunchtime and is taking appropriate action to address this. The effective use of group working and partners to discuss tasks helps promote good collaborative skills which are essential to pupils' future learning and economic well-being.

While there has been a reduction in the number of pupils whose attendance is poor and in spite of the school's best efforts, attendance remains below both the national and local authority average. The school currently uses assessment data to demonstrate to parents the impact of poor attendance on learning and from the start of next term is taking further important steps to improve attendance with the establishment of a breakfast club. Since the last monitoring inspection, the school has taken a good number of actions that have started to improve pupils' punctuality at the start of the school day. A developing partnership between families and the school's home support worker is intended to improve both attendance and punctuality.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last monitoring inspection and the school is well placed to achieve its targets for the quality of teaching next term. This is because the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are rigorous and accurate and the school uses a range of data to identify teaching and learning that are not effective enough. The support provided to help teachers improve their professional skills is well matched to their individual needs.

In the Foundation Stage there is a good balance between child and adult initiated learning. The teaching of small groups is good because learning is well matched to children's needs. Interesting learning resources are prepared and readily accessible. Teachers and teaching assistants effectively help children to develop their speaking and listening skills through well planned group working.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, common strengths of the teaching are the use of clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils, very good class management, effective use of teaching assistants and good relationships. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively, for example, to provide photographic resources for geography and to explore parts of text in English. Questions are often used well both to assess pupils' knowledge and to extend their understanding. Learning tasks are usually well matched to pupils' differing learning needs.

In outstanding lessons teachers have high expectations and the classes are very well managed so that pupils are eager to learn. The teachers make learning interesting and enjoyable. The very good use of challenging questions extends pupils' understanding. Assessment is used to identify pupils' misconceptions and these are successfully addressed. Pupils receive useful feedback on their performance during the lesson so that they know

how well they are doing and what they need to do better. Very good lesson planning enables a great deal to be learnt and well thought out teaching results in a brisk pace of learning.

In lessons where learning is not as good, whole-class teaching is too long or the transition from one activity to another is not well managed and so the pace of learning slows. In one lesson, pupils did not have the opportunity to feed back to the rest of the class following discussion in pairs. Lesson planning is generally good although sometimes plans are over ambitious and not effectively based on assessment information.

The quality of marking is good overall, with plenty of comments to help pupils understand how to improve their work. However, pupils do not respond to these comments often enough and teachers are not sufficiently rigorous in checking up. The best marking gives pupils feedback on their progress towards their targets, which are well established for writing. The marking of pupils' writing progress books is particularly good. Pupils have started to assess their own work and set their own targets but this is not done consistently in all classes.

The use of assessment has continued to improve since the last monitoring inspection. There are now many examples of the effective use of assessment to help improve teachers' planning and pupils' learning but this is not consistent in all classes. The school is not using parts of National Curriculum levels well enough to know exactly how high standards are across the school. For example, at the end of Year 2, the school's emphasis is on the proportion of pupils attaining Level 2 and above rather than Level 2B, (the nationally expected level at the end of Key Stage 1), and above.

Since the last monitoring inspection, the school has improved the use of curriculum time during the school day. It has made good progress in addressing the key weakness in its care, guidance and support of pupils by taking a number of effective steps to improve the support for pupils' academic progress.

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

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

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very good leadership with a clear focus on raising standards. Progress against the school improvement plan is appropriately monitored by the senior leadership team and school improvement partnership board, which includes a governor and representatives of the LA. The new management structure, which enables middle managers to play a greater role in leading the work of classes, is helping to ensure greater accountability. Phase leaders within each key stage lead the monitoring of standards, progress and the curriculum effectively. Core subject coordinators know their subjects well. They know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and are taking appropriate action to raise standards.

The governing body is increasingly aware of its role in holding the school to account for the quality of education provided and the headteacher provides appropriate information and guidance to enable them to do this. The governing body has been well supported by recent training in developing their strategic role by a LA Governor Trainer.

The leadership of the school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and has a good focus on raising standards. Because of this, and because the quality of teaching and learning is rising the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

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 – good progress.
- Improve the ways that the governing body evaluates the school's work and holds it to account – good progress.

External support

The local authority and Sage Education Trust has provided good support to the school. This has included joint lesson observations, training for governors and support for middle managers and subject leaders. The work of the school improvement partnership board has been particularly useful in monitoring progress. The school has valued the developing role of the newly appointed school improvement officer while acknowledging the need for it to be proportionate to the school's reducing need.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

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