



5 May 2006

Miss P. Nuttall  
Hunters Hall Primary School  
Alibon Road  
Dagenham  
RM10 8DE

Dear Miss Nuttall

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HUNTERS HALL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Jackie White HMI, Sheila Nolan AI and Brian Evans AI to your school on 26 and 27 April 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 November 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 leaders, subject co-ordinators, the chair of governors and the local authority link inspector.

### **Context**

There have been no significant changes affecting the school since becoming subject to special measures. The well established staffing remains stable.

### **Achievement and standards**

The November inspection judged achievement in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 to be inadequate. Since then, the school has taken robust steps to improve the pupils' performance in English. The strong focus on writing

has met with some success. Despite a legacy of underachievement, standards in the English lessons seen were close to average overall. Improved assessment practice, regular testing and monitoring of the pupils' progress, and the adoption of a commercial scheme have boosted progress. Current assessments indicate that 72% of the pupils are likely to reach Level 4 or above in the 2006 national tests. Whilst remaining below the national average, this would represent a significant improvement on the previous results. At the same time, the school recognises that further work is needed to develop pupils' skills in expressing more complex ideas in writing.

Efforts to improve mathematical skills have been less systematic than those for English. The regular tracking of performance from co-ordinated assessments is at an early stage of development. National test results are unlikely to match the school's target that is realistically in line with national expectations. There is still underachievement in mathematics. Weaknesses remain in how pupils' apply routine mathematical operations and number skills to word problems, even in the context of money. Pattern spotting, the interpretation of graphical presentations and aspects of shape and space are also underdeveloped.

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

- raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics - satisfactory progress.

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

Pupils' personal development and well-being were judged by the November inspection to be satisfactory. The low standards in literacy and numeracy prevented the judgement from being better because they disadvantaged the pupils in terms of their future economic well-being. The positive features of this section of the report still apply and standards are beginning to improve. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are very positive.

### **Quality of provision**

The inspection report judged teaching and learning to be inadequate. During this monitoring visit 21 parts of lessons were observed: seven were judged to be of good quality, 10 were satisfactory and four were inadequate. Some progress has been made with the issues identified by the inspection. However, the emphasis in planning still resides with teaching activities rather

than with activities that structure and accelerate learning. Too often learning objectives are so broad they lack meaning and do not clarify progression, such as by stating what pupils must, should and could do in a lesson. There is too much planning that is perfunctory and fails to respond to the learning needs of individual pupils. There is evidence of effective planning for teaching and learning in English. Activities in English are more successfully focused on learning. In English lessons, teachers model learning well and are able to accelerate progress because they know what individual pupils must do next to improve. This good practice has not been incorporated into other subjects.

The use of assessment information to set whole school targets has strengthened: however, many teachers are not familiar enough with the prior attainment of individual pupils and are unable to challenge them appropriately or evaluate their progress in lessons. There are examples of good marking which provide encouraging feedback and helpful guidance to pupils. This is not common practice. The use of assessment to support learning is a key area for development.

The best lessons included:

- planning based on a clear understanding of pupils' needs
- specific, appropriately challenging learning objectives coupled with a clear explanation of what pupils need to do to succeed
- high expectations for the standard of work achieved in lessons
- a good variety of tasks that structure pupils' learning
- questioning that gives pupils opportunities to think and develop their responses.

Less successful lessons included:

- low expectations for progress
- a mismatch between learning objectives, learning activities and pupils' needs
- too much unfocused teacher talk
- a lack of pace

There has been insufficient progress in improving teaching and learning since the November inspection.

Satisfactory progress in improving care and guidance has been made since the November inspection. Provision for care continues to be good and provision for many pupils is enhanced by some unusual features. For

example, in an award-winning school environment, pupils are given responsibilities for the care of ducklings, hens, a cockerel and the school rabbit on the school site. Proper attention is given to procedures to ensure pupils' safety in and around the school.

However, only very recently has the school begun to develop effective methods for keeping track of pupils' progress. Guidance is still inadequate because currently assessment data is not used effectively by teachers to monitor whether either individuals or groups of pupils are underachieving. Similarly, guidance for pupils on how to improve their work is also weak because it is too general in scope. While there are many examples of good practice in English, this is not always apparent in other subjects.

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

- Identify and plan more effectively for the pupils' individual needs - inadequate progress
- Ensure that pupils know how to improve their work - inadequate progress

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and senior leaders have responded to the November 2005 report with energy and commitment to improvement. Prior to the inspection the school had identified the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning and its monitoring and evaluation procedures. Since the inspection, a set of classroom observations in partnership with the Community Inspection and Advisory Service has provided school leaders with a picture of the quality of teaching and learning. The outcomes of observations have been shared with staff. However, the effectiveness of these observations is limited by the structure of the observation record form. The proforma is focused on a wide range of basic teaching skills rather than concentrating on the quality of learning.

The ability of subject co-coordinators to carry out their role is variable reflecting the level of focus on different subjects in the school's recovery strategy. Improved subject leadership is required for similar improvements to those already evident in English, to raise standards in other curriculum areas.

The collection and use of data has improved so that pupils' progress is monitored and teachers are asked to explain any apparent lack of progress. This has enabled the school to begin the discussion with staff about pupils'

progress. However, this information is not being used consistently to plan pupils' learning.

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

- Make more effective use of data to identify potential and actual under-achievement – satisfactory progress
- Develop approaches to monitoring that are consistently rigorous, evaluative and based firmly upon measurable outcomes - satisfactory progress
- Ensure that timely and reliable feedback from monitoring is undertaken so that everyone knows whether improvement is being secured - satisfactory progress

### **External support**

The local authority (LA) has worked in partnership with the school to carry out a review of the quality of teaching. This has resulted in a report with a series of recommendations for improving teaching which are appropriate. The LA's support has yet to help the school shift its perspective from teaching to learning. Training for all staff on setting appropriate learning objects is planned to be delivered by the LA very soon after this monitoring inspection.

The LA's statement of action does not include a commentary on the LA's involvement with the school prior to the inspection as the school had not been identified as causing concern. The LA actions do not align to the areas identified for improvement and, therefore, do not support the evaluation of the impact of actions taken. The plan to improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching does not include any reference, for example, to providing training in conducting lesson observations, making judgements, coaching or giving feedback. Given that the inspection judged capacity for improvement as inadequate, there is too much emphasis on 'as required'.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Quality of LA's statement of action - inadequate. The LA should address the weaknesses identified and prepare amendments by the second monitoring inspection.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Focus monitoring on learning outcomes rather than teaching techniques.
- Improve the planning of lessons to address the needs of different groups of learners.
- Improve assessment so that teachers and pupils are clearer about what pupils need to do to improve.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Education, Arts & Libraries for Barking & Dagenham.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
**HM Inspector**