



23 June 2006

Mrs J Gornell (Acting Headteacher)
Old Hall Drive Primary School
Old Hall Drive
Gorton
Manchester
Lancashire
M18 7FU

Dear Mrs Gornell

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF OLD HALL DRIVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Mrs Margot D'Arcy and Mrs Judith Tolley, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 21 and 22 June 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 February 2006.

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, visited 18 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff, groups of pupils, governors, consultant staff from the local authority and the local authority's adviser.

Context

Since the inspection in February 2006 there has been considerable change in staffing with some teachers leaving and other temporary and supply staff taking up post. Currently, 8 of the 15 teaching posts are filled by substantive members of staff. The four members of the acting leadership team - headteacher, deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers - have been seconded into their posts. In the next management tier, five of the six

subject and aspect leader posts are filled by permanent staff; English is being managed by secondees. Three of the temporary staff have been seconded into the school, on short-term contracts renewable each term, from the local authority's intervention team and one other, an advanced skills teacher, has been seconded from a senior position within another Manchester primary school.

For September, the school has secured 12 permanent teaching posts, an improvement on the current position. The substantive headteacher and deputy remain on long-term sick leave.

On the first day of this inspection, 37 Year 5 and 6 pupils and four members of the teaching staff were away on a residential trip.

Achievement and standards

Standards across the school remain well below average in all areas, although there are some signs of improvement in the outcomes for children about to leave the Foundation Stage and for those in Year 2. The school's recent history of results at Year 2 is that around half the pupils gained Level 1 or below in reading, writing and mathematics; far too low for them to access the Key Stage 2 curriculum. Under the leadership of the acting headteacher, and with the support of the local authority intervention team, the school has begun to eat into this long tail of underachievement. The unvalidated annual assessments for Year 2 pupils this year show a rise in the numbers gaining Level 2c in reading and mathematics, the minimum standard expected for their age. These gains, although an improvement, are not yet substantial enough to provide a firm platform for pupils' further learning and for them to access the Key Stage 2 curriculum.

Standards of pupils' work in lessons at Key Stage 1 are poor, and already by the end of Year 1 gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge are evident. As worrying are the signs of disaffection and reluctance to read and write displayed by some pupils.

The school does not expect to meet its Key Stage 2 targets for this year in English although it does expect to come close to them. It does expect to meet its targets in mathematics and science at Level 4. However, the school remains a long way away from the national floor targets of 65% of pupils reaching Level 4 for the core subjects.

Standards in Key Stage 2, as seen in lessons, remain very low overall as the legacy of underachievement in Key Stage 1 is carried forward. Pupils have large gaps in their skills and knowledge which inhibit their progress substantially. This is particularly the case in English. Their reading and writing skills are poor. Too many pupils in Key Stage 2 still do not know the phonic knowledge and key words that they ought to have learnt in Key Stage 1. Their handwriting is immature and ill-formed and the presentation of their

work is weak. These are skills that should have been mastered in Key Stage 1.

On this visit, pupils generally made satisfactory progress during lessons, but this is not sufficient to fill the gaps in their knowledge and skills and to increase their rates of progress.

The standards in English across the school, from Foundation Stage to Year 6, are a major cause for concern. Pupils' weaknesses in reading, writing, speaking and listening are having a detrimental impact on their ability to access the rest of the curriculum and to enjoy their learning.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- Raise standards and improve progress for all groups of pupils – **inadequate progress**

Personal development and well-being

Attendance remains below average. The school has introduced a breakfast club and this has improved the attitudes and attendance of a minority of vulnerable pupils. Similarly, work with parents through the Behaviour and Attendance Network has been successful in fostering positive attitudes and supporting a small number of pupils. The school has introduced systems which include first-day phone calls to parents and carers to chase up absences and a rewards programme for those pupils with good attendance. However, there remains a core of persistent non-attenders and overall there has been no significant improvement since the inspection in February. Attendance rates in Years 3 and 6 in particular remain very low.

Pupils' punctuality is poor; parents and pupils display little sense of urgency in getting to school on time. This is because there is uncertainty about the time school starts.

Behaviour is satisfactory overall and on this visit it was good in many lessons. This is due to the successful and consistent implementation of the new behaviour policy. Pupils respond well to consistent expectations of their behaviour and to the reward system. They usually listen attentively. Good relationships with staff are becoming evident and pupils are more willing to learn. When they are given the opportunity to work collaboratively they concentrate on tasks set. However, they find it difficult to sustain concentration when teacher dominated activities mean they are not directly involved in discussion for lengthy periods. Opportunities to develop pupils' independence and to enable them to use their initiative are often missed.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- Continue to work with pupils, their parents and carers to improve attendance – **inadequate progress**

Quality of provision

Inspectors observed 18 lessons or part lessons; of these, 4 were inadequate, 11 satisfactory and 3 good. This profile of teaching is inadequate overall to raise standards. Too much of the satisfactory teaching is mediocre and is founded upon low expectations by the teachers of what their pupils can and should achieve. Features of the teaching that need reviewing include:

- a lack of urgency about the need to improve pupils' skills and knowledge quickly
- work that is insufficiently matched to pupils' needs, to filling the gaps in their knowledge and to move them on to the next steps in their learning
- for some pupils, insufficient challenge
- missed opportunities to drive home key skills and
- over-long teacher-led activities which cause pupils to lose concentration.

The teaching of English is weak. The early preparation for reading and writing is not given a high enough priority in the Foundation Stage and insufficient attention is paid to developing children's skills in speaking and listening. Reading and writing are not taught well in Key Stage 1. The systems for ensuring pupils learn to read quickly are very poor; there are examples of the Year 1 pupils having only experienced a handful of the very first level books from the reading scheme over this academic year and being made to 're-read' one such book for more than five weeks. There is no consistency in the provision for teaching phonics and it is not clear whether all pupils receive their entitlement to a daily, structured, well-taught phonics session based upon national guidance. The teaching in Key Stage 1 does not link the various elements of reading, writing, phonics, spelling, handwriting and speaking and listening together constantly, so missed opportunities abound to reinforce learning. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, pupils writing about animals were not required to check their writing for correct use of letter-sound knowledge or full stops and capital letters. One child wrote 'cos ar niez an safd' for 'cats are nice and soft'. A brief chat with the child revealed that she knew a range of letter sound combinations, and after being asked to listen carefully and sound out what she could hear, she was able to rewrite four of the five words perfectly, as well as add the capital letter and full stop. However, her formation of the letters was already incorrect and habituated. In Key Stages 1 and 2, too much of the writing in pupils' books is marked without pupils being required to correct basic errors such as these.

Pupils carry the legacy of weak teaching and low expectations into Key Stage 2 and not all teachers in Key Stage 2 know what their pupils ought to have mastered in Key Stage 1 and how to fill those gaps. As a result, too often, the new teaching takes place without the gaps having been tackled.

Curriculum planning lacks structure and coherence. There is no whole-school overview that gives a clear picture of how breadth and balance are planned for different year groups to provide continuity and progression in learning. There is often significant variation in the quality of short-term planning and in the organisation of time between classes, even in the same year group. In some instances there is significant slippage of time.

Supervision of pupils outside the school buildings and outside the school gate is inadequate. The school could not provide inspectors with details of the agreed time allocation for duties, before and after the school day. At the beginning and end of the school day pupils who are not accompanied by parents or carers are left to their own devices to cross the road. During lunchtimes and playtimes pupils also cross the road to the school field on their own. In these situations children are at risk.

When they arrive at school pupils are faced with locked doors and an unsupervised playground before the bell goes and it is time to line up. This includes children in the Nursery. Opportunities are missed to greet and welcome parents and pupils and to extend the learning beyond the classrooms.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning ensuring that teachers challenge their pupils realistically and have high expectations of what they can achieve – **inadequate progress**

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher provides clear, firm leadership for the school. She has had the resolve to take several very difficult staffing decisions to secure some improvements in the quality of the teaching and to build a more stable staffing complement for the new school year. She has implemented a new school-wide system to manage pupils' behaviour more effectively and this is bearing fruit. She has also introduced a robust system to track pupils' progress, which she and senior staff are now using to monitor standards, evaluate the quality of teaching and identify groups who need additional help.

The senior management team has been instrumental in developing a more rigorous monitoring regime in the school through analysis of results, scrutiny of pupils' work, lesson observations and evaluative feedback to staff. The professional development of staff has been a major priority and the local

authority's consultant, the seconded teachers, local authority inspector and the acting headteacher have all been involved in providing this.

As a result, with important over-arching systems in place and the staff more attuned to the drive for improvement, the school is better placed to focus more directly on the subject-specific issues that are now emerging.

There remains the concern, however, that the senior staff in the school are not substantive and that, despite the recent support provided, the expertise and experience to lead the drive for improvement do not yet reside within the school's own staff.

Members of the governing body are fully committed to the school and take their role very seriously. The foundations have been laid to enable them to take a more strategic and critical role in monitoring the school's performance. The addition of some new members, experienced in supporting school improvement, has strengthened the team. Training needs have been identified and systems have been set up to provide support for new or inexperienced members. Governors are becoming more aware of their responsibilities and of the need to monitor performance. Meetings are informing them about the extent of the challenges faced by the school and how it is going about tackling them. Whilst governors have gained a clearer understanding of the big picture, in many areas they are still feeling their way towards the fine detail and how they can make a difference. They need to be more confident about asking questions to gain the full information they require, for example about attendance, and thus challenge the school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- Ensure that leaders monitor and evaluate performance rigorously in all areas of school life and take effective action to make improvements where necessary - **satisfactory progress**
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school rigorously to account for its performance – **inadequate progress**

External support

The school has received good support from the local authority in the form of: professional help for the acting headteacher to tackle difficult staffing issues; seconded, experienced teachers; consultancy support; and additional help for the governing body. The local authority adviser was appointed to the school following the inspection but quickly and astutely assessed the full extent of the issues it faces. He has provided very good analysis and challenge for the school. The local authority's statement of action is satisfactory. It is clear and sets out the main factors taken into consideration when deciding to provide support for the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – **inadequate**

Quality of the local authority's statement of action – **satisfactory**

Newly qualified teachers may be may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the teaching of English throughout the school.
- Ensure consistency of planning and timetabling.
- Improve the supervision of pupils in the playground and immediately outside the school gates.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Chief Education Officer for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Angela M Westington
H M Inspector