



21 June 2006

Mrs Morgan-Huws
The Acting Deputy Headteacher
Newchurch Primary School
Newchurch
Sandown
Isle of Wight
PO36 ONL

Dear Mrs Morgan-Hughes

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NEWCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Michael Pye AI to your school on 8 and 9 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 visited seven part lessons, scrutinised documents and pupils' books and met with the acting deputy headteacher, consultant headteacher, groups of teachers, a group of pupils, the chair of governors, parent governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has resigned. The deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher but he is currently on long-term sick leave. The acting deputy headteacher has taken over as acting headteacher but she will start her maternity leave on 2nd July 2006. There is mentor support from an ex-headteacher for 3.5 days per week. A new

headteacher has been appointed on a year's contract and he takes up his post in September 2006.

Achievement and standards

Progress through the school was judged to be inadequate and standards were insufficiently high at the time of the February 2006 inspection. Progress was poor in writing and mathematics, particularly so for high attaining pupils.

The school has introduced more regular assessments and is now able to track progress more effectively. These records, together with the current teachers' assessments demonstrate that the percentage of pupils who meet national expectations at the end of Year 2 are likely to remain average in English. Attainment in reading and writing is average although progress remains inadequate. Standards in mathematics by the end of Year 2 are broadly average although there are signs of some improvement in the numbers of pupils attaining the higher grades. This is partly due to the school analysing where pupils found difficulties in previous years, and successfully tackling those issues.

In all lessons observed standards were average but in the literacy and numeracy lessons observed in Years 1 and 2 pupils made inadequate progress. There are significant numbers of pupils, who do not achieve well enough, particularly in writing and reach only average standards. In Years 3 and 4 standards in English and mathematics are satisfactory, but given the starting point of these pupils their achievement remains inadequate.

In Reception a good lesson resulted in pupils making above average progress as a consequence of consistent challenge being presented to them.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They show a very mature attitude towards their work and enjoy coming to school. According to the pupils, there is still little opportunity for team-work or working in pairs or groups. Discussion work is limited. Some pupils expressed disappointment in the work given to them, complaining it was, 'boring and repetitive' and 'too easy'. Some had been asked to 'wait patiently' once they had finished the task set. The school is already aware of the need to challenge these higher attaining pupils but as yet there has been little improvement in provision for them in the classroom.

Quality of provision

The school judges teaching to be satisfactory overall. However inspection evidence shows that overall teaching and learning are inadequate. In Years 1 and 2 there are a significant number of lessons that result in inadequate progress. Senior management has established a cycle of lesson monitoring, although observations are neither regular, nor sufficiently rigorous, and have not had the required impact on the quality of learning and teaching.

Teachers have received further training in lesson planning and the use of assessment to track the progress of pupils. In some lessons, teachers are now planning work that is suitable for pupils of different abilities, including high attaining pupils. However, there is still room for the further development of a more creative approach to challenging such pupils, such as through peer discussions. Too many lessons are over directed by teachers and this results in pupils' progress being limited. Pupils state that the best lessons are those where they solve problems and learn independently.

Open questioning that allows pupils to freely express their ideas, together with questions that probe the deeper knowledge and understanding of pupils are not used sufficiently.

Satisfactory assessment procedures are now in place, and these enable the school to track the progress of pupils, set targets for them and identify underachievers. However there are inconsistencies in the extent to which such pupils' needs are further analysed, and appropriate action clearly identified on tracking documents.

In lessons there is insufficient progress in using assessment to aid pupil achievement. Not all teachers consistently explain the objectives of the lesson and what standards are expected. Pupils are therefore unable to evaluate their work or understand how to improve it. Teachers are not making maximum use of on-going assessment to enable them to correctly identify the pupils who have and have not understood the learning objectives. This hampers the teachers' ability to use such information to plan the next step in the learning of individuals.

Homework is set for English and mathematics, although pupils told inspectors that they often find homework boring, repetitive and would like to see a variety of topics or subjects used.

The curriculum remains satisfactory although the school has successfully extended teaching time in Years 3 and 4 to match the national average.

There have been no moves to identify where writing for different purposes is delivered in other subjects across the curriculum. Since the last inspection, the computers have been repaired. This together with additional training for staff means that there is now satisfactory provision for pupils to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils state that they are not all getting equal access to computers, and that not all teachers are using their interactive whiteboards. The much needed plans to extend and refurbish the outdoor area for reception pupils have not been developed.

The school sets targets for pupils but they are inconsistently referred to in lessons. However many pupils do not remember their targets and are confused about what they mean. Consequently many do not have a clear and precise idea of what they have to do to improve.

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

- Improve the teachers' use of assessment information to ensure all pupils are suitably challenged, particularly the more able pupils in writing and mathematics – inadequate progress

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher, consultant headteacher and the LA have responded to the February 2006 inspection report with the production of an action plan which is clear and has been recently reviewed. Although some improvement has been made, progress has been far too slow. It includes the key issues from the inspection and has identified the actions necessary to tackle them. Most systems are now in place but as yet it is not possible to measure the impact. Performance management for teachers is still not fully in place which is hindering improvement in the quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' writing in particular.

Members of the senior leadership team have been provided with an abundance of training in the form of courses provided by the LA, training provided by the consultant headteacher and visits to other schools. These have helped senior leaders to improve their leadership and management skills on a day-to-day basis but strategic planning remains a significant area for development.

Since the inspection, all teachers have been formally observed once by the consultant headteacher. Informal 'learning walks' (observations) have been conducted by the LA. The lack of a rigorous programme of lesson observation has meant that the school does not have a clear picture of the quality of teaching. The areas for discussion, although shared with staff, have not

highlighted clearly what teachers need to do to improve their practice. Teachers are not given a clear judgement as to the quality of their teaching. The effectiveness of these observations is further limited by the structure of the observation forms which are not focused sufficiently on the quality of learning.

The governing body is committed to the school's success but does not have a thorough understanding of what governing a school in special measures requires. Although governors have recently undergone training and have visited lessons, they are not yet in a position to challenge information given to them by the school. Although they have been involved in the writing of the school's self-evaluation form, their inexperience has hampered their understanding and grasp of the true strengths and weaknesses of the school. This results in them not being well placed to help the school make the significant improvements necessary.

The school has made some improvements in the way it communicates with parents. A recent survey has prompted the school into action. Written communications are now more informative and regular newsletters, letters about work covered in class and national curriculum levels are beginning to strengthen parental links. There are still some concerns raised by parents, particularly around the challenge for more able pupils which remains a significant issue for the school.

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

- Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management through providing appropriate professional development opportunities – satisfactory progress
- Develop rigorous self-evaluation procedures that will enable the school to identify and implement appropriate targets for improvement – inadequate progress
- Improve links with parents – satisfactory progress

External support

The quality of support provided by the LA is satisfactory. This is co-ordinated by the principal and link inspectors who visit the school regularly. The LA's contribution also includes additional support from a consultant headteacher, who is working with the senior leadership team to raise the quality of teaching and learning and to act as a role model. Specialist support has been provided by the Primary Strategy Support Team for two days per week. The LA's statement of action is good overall but it has not used its power to place additional governors onto the relatively inexperienced governing body.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate progress

The quality of the LA's statement of action is good

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

Priorities for further improvement

- Review and evaluate the impact of arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by developing teachers' questioning techniques so as to give pupils opportunities to think and participate in discussion.
- Make more effective use of discussions and assessments at the end of lessons to identify the next steps in pupils' learning.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Senior Education Officer for Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat
Additional Inspector