



27 November 2006

Mr Tony Markham
The Headteacher
Herne Junior School
Love Lane
Petersfield
GU13 4BP

Dear Mr Markham

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HERNE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Sue Rogers, Additional Inspector and Chris Corp, Additional Inspector, to your school on 22 and 23 November 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2005.

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Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held discussions with the acting headteacher, the senior leadership team, the curriculum and year group leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Discussions were also held with the local authority's (LA) school improvement manager as well as pupils, including young governors. Inspectors observed 17 part lessons.

Context

In the autumn term 2006 the school appointed Mr Markham as the new substantive headteacher; he is still working in an acting capacity until he takes up the post on a permanent basis in January 2007.

Since the previous monitoring visit in July 2006, there have been further changes to the membership of the governing body with two governors leaving and being replaced. One of the Year 5 teachers has left and has been replaced; two of the Year 3 teachers have resigned and are due to leave at the end of the autumn term. The school has advertised, but has yet to appoint new teachers for the Year 3 classes.

The headteacher currently receives additional support from an experienced deputy headteacher from another school, for two and a half days a week. The support includes helping the current substantive deputy headteacher at the school to develop her role as well as supporting the headteacher with the overall leadership and management of the school.

Achievement and standards

The school has made satisfactory progress in this key area. Since the last visit the school has introduced a whole school system of data review and collection. As a result, all teachers now have access to individual pupils' details and are able to set realistic targets in English and mathematics. Many teachers are now using this data to plan suitable activities for pupils. Most pupils are aware of their target levels and what they need to do to achieve them. Teachers discuss the targets with pupils on a regular basis.

The school sets suitable targets for each year group and is now able to identify those pupils who have reached their targets twice during the academic year. However, this timescale is too long and does not ensure that the school identifies quickly enough those pupils who are underachieving in order to provide good levels of support.

Most teachers have a clear understanding of individual pupils' progress but there is no whole school view of the progress pupils have made towards their targets in the first half of this term. Therefore, although measurable targets have been set there is still no system to monitor progress on a short-term basis across a year or a particular group, such as pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

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 remains good. The pupils continue to demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and around school. Attendance is still above the national average and has improved further this term. The pupils enjoy most of their lessons especially those where they are actively engaged. They feel safe and well cared for.

The spiritual, social and moral aspects of the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) are well planned and delivered. However, there are missed opportunities for pupils to experience multi-cultural aspects and this will need to be enhanced when reviewing the curriculum.

Pupils are aware of the need to adopt a healthy life style and were able to devise healthy menus in a good PSHE lesson. Many pupils are provided with good opportunities to learn about how to keep themselves safe, and to contribute to the community, as well as learning some skills which will contribute to developing their future economic well-being. However, these areas are not sufficiently well identified within curriculum guidance and, as a result, are not always made available equally well for all pupils.

Quality of provision

The progress made in improving the quality of teaching, although less successful in some classes, is satisfactory overall. Of the lessons observed, five were judged to be good, eight were satisfactory and four were judged to be inadequate. The good focus on using assessment strategies to support and inform learning is improving the quality of teaching as well as the quality of planning in the core subjects. However, there are still too many weaknesses in teaching, especially in the classes for younger pupils.

Most teachers are systematically using the required 'we are learning to' (WALT) and 'what I am looking for' (WILF) prompts in their planning and in lessons. Where this is used well, pupils have a better understanding of their learning and know what teachers expect from them. However, too often WALTs lack clarity and it is the WILF prompts that identify with absolute clarity for pupils the purpose of the lesson, what they will learn and what they have to do. Teachers are trialling useful ideas to motivate pupils to talk about and evaluate their learning, but these systems are in the early stages of development and are not always used sufficiently well. This reduces pupils' ability to explain what it was that they could or could not understand or do.

Pupils are becoming more involved in their learning and are making better progress. Good examples were seen when pupils used the WILF prompts to evaluate their work and that of their peers, but this practice does not happen often enough in all lessons. New marking systems are also being developed; the best marking refers to success in pupils' targets and is very informative, but some teachers are still not specific enough in their marking. Furthermore, pupils are rarely given opportunities to respond to teachers' comments.

Nevertheless, there have also been good improvements in individual target setting for pupils. More pupils know what is expected of them because systems are now in place in all classes. Most, but not all teachers follow up these targets and the pupils notice and appreciate the difference when they do. In the words of one pupil 'I now know what I have to do to improve my work and know when I am successful.' The target setting process is too new to evaluate consistency and impact. Targets for pupils with particular needs are not revisited often enough.

Too many weaknesses identified on previous visits remains. Common characteristics of inadequate lessons included a slow pace with low expectations, insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to talk to each other about their learning, ineffectively managed group work, additional adults not being used as effectively as they could to help pupils to develop their thinking and insufficient opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they are learning and the progress they are making. The pupils in these lessons spent too much time listening passively which led to many losing interest and some becoming restless.

Nevertheless on the whole, lessons are generally livelier than they were. Where teaching is at least satisfactory, teachers are making better use of questions and pupils are engaging more enthusiastically and purposefully in their learning. Interactive whiteboards (IWB) are now available in every class and are used to motivate pupils, but this practice is also inconsistent. There has been insufficient training and limited resources to support teachers and enable them to improve their use of information and communication technology (ICT) including IWBs. Consequently, pupils also do not use ICT sufficiently to support or enhance their learning across the curriculum.

There have been satisfactory improvements in curriculum guidance for the planning of English and mathematics. However, the work done on planning for many of the other curriculum subjects is inadequate overall. This is because learning objectives are not sufficiently focused on the content, concepts or skills that pupils should learn.

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 – satisfactory progress.
- Revise curriculum guidance to give teachers more help in planning and evaluating their lessons and to make better use of time – inadequate progress.

Progress on the additional priorities identified for further improvement in the second monitoring report in July 2006:

- Improve planning and assessment for learning at all levels – good progress.

Leadership and management

The appointment of an experienced and successful substantive headteacher as well as the ever improving quality of governance is helping to strengthen the quality of leadership and management at the school. There is no longer a culture of denial and all leaders and managers now recognise their role in helping the school to improve. Consequently, the majority of leaders and managers are beginning to contribute more effectively to whole school evaluation although this is not yet sufficiently thorough or accurate. Where this is improving well, for example with the leadership of most year groups, this is having a positive impact on raising the quality of teaching and learning particularly in years 4, 5 and 6.

The senior leadership team and subject leaders are monitoring planning and the extent to which teachers are following agreed policies. However, staff are still not all adhering to agreed policies. The school has correctly identified that this is often a result of misunderstanding and misinterpreting information. Consequently, the school has helped staff to agree the meaning of key educational words and this has led to a better understanding of what needs to be done to help raise standards.

Most but not all leaders now provide a clearer sense of direction. However, there are significant weaknesses within the senior leadership team; not all key leaders are producing action plans, setting a clear direction for staff or contributing sufficiently well to whole school improvement. The quality of action plans is very variable, and only a small minority include measurable success criteria in terms of quantifiable targets. There is also insufficient information overall about when actions have been completed and how well these have made an impact on pupils. Nevertheless, all action plans now identify those responsible for leading developments.

Although improving, the quality of whole school self-evaluation still lacks rigour. Lesson observations undertaken by the school do not include sufficient judgments about standards and progress. Furthermore, not all leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this is reducing the rate of progress, for example in improving curriculum guidance. Nevertheless, leaders and managers now feel more empowered to support whole school improvement although a small minority still lack the skills to do this effectively. This is unhelpful to the school in its efforts to improve the remaining weaknesses and inconsistencies and is compromising the school's capacity to make good progress on the key issues for improvement.

Progress on 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

The school has benefited from the support provided by the seconded deputy headteacher from another school as well as the good support provided by the local authority (LA). As a result the quality of the learning environment, as well as planning and teaching, is better although the latter still requires significant improvements. The headteacher has received good support in his leadership role. Support meetings have made effective use of the LA's statement of action to monitor the school's progress and ensure it is on track.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

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

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
H M Inspector