



21 November 2006

Mr S Bartlett  
The Headteacher  
Gatten and Lake Primary School  
Howard Road  
Shanklin  
PO37 6HD

Dear Mr Bartlett

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GATTEN AND LAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Sue Rogers, Additional Inspector and John Laver, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 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 October 2005.

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### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held discussions with the acting headteacher, the senior management team, the leaders for learning for Key Stages 1 and 2 as well as the Foundation Stage leader. Discussions were also held with pupils as well as the attached inspector for the local authority (LA). Inspectors observed 17 part lessons.

### Context

At the time of the last inspection an acting headteacher was in post. As a result of the unsuccessful appointment of a new substantive headteacher, a second, experienced acting headteacher, referred to by the LA as a corporate headteacher, has been appointed on a temporary basis until the end of July 2007. The acting headteacher is also the substantive headteacher of another

school on the island. Additional changes in staffing since the last inspection in June 2006 include two new teachers, one in Key Stage 1 and one in Key Stage 2. There are also two new administration officers and a new bursar.

The deputy headteacher has relinquished her position, but is still a teacher at the school. There is a newly appointed deputy headteacher; she was an internal appointment and is currently working as the acting deputy headteacher until she takes up the post on a permanent basis. A former member of staff is providing preparation, planning and assessment time for teachers as well as providing cover to release managers.

### Achievement and standards

The achievement and standards of children in the Foundation Stage are broadly satisfactory. These children develop positive attitudes to learning from an early age and make particularly good progress in their physical development. However, in line with the national picture they achieve less well with their writing, calculation and their ability to link sounds and letters.

Standards in Years 1 and 2 continue to rise. This improvement is evident in the unvalidated National Curriculum results for 2006. These showed above average standards, especially in reading. Overall, girls attained higher standards than boys, although the gap was narrower in mathematics than in English. However, although most pupils reached their school targets, pupils with learning difficulties made less progress, mainly because of faulty identification procedures and inadequate monitoring.

Although the school has noted trends in standards and progress, its analysis lacks rigour. The school has identified some relevant factors such as staff instability, but it has a limited understanding of why rates of progress have varied between different groups of pupils and between different subjects.

In contrast to Years 1 and 2, efforts to improve standards in Years 3 and 4 have been less successful. Recent school targets have not been met in these year groups, with the least amount of progress being made in writing and numeracy. The school recognises underachievement, particularly by boys, and understands the need to set more challenging targets. However, it has a limited understanding of why there are variations in performance. The school has identified differences in the quality of teaching and learning of older pupils in parallel classes. It has begun to address this issue, but with only partial success, as was evident from observations during the current monitoring visit. There are weaknesses in standards and achievement in all year groups. In the Reception year, expectations of more able children to develop numeracy skills are too low.

Although teachers' planning usually recognises the need to match work to pupils' capabilities, in too many lessons this is still not put effectively into practice. In particular, more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, especially in those parts of the lesson where the teacher has all the pupils together. The quality of written presentation is unsatisfactory throughout the school.

The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is inconsistent and is only in the early stages of being analysed meaningfully. The school does not always provide sufficient support for all of these pupils. Although measures are being developed to improve this provision, it is too early to measure the impact.

Assessment data is not used well or rigorously enough to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged and reach high enough standards. Pupils themselves recognise this, although they find their own literacy targets useful. Whilst supportive of the school, pupils believe that they spend too much time sitting and listening, commenting that 'sometimes the work is too easy' and 'Why can't we go off to work whilst the teacher talks to the others?' Although the school has recognised the need to improve standards and progress in particular areas like writing, an awareness of how to achieve this is only partially in place.

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

- Raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics - satisfactory progress

### Personal development and well-being

The improvement in personal development and well being noted in the previous monitoring visit has been sustained and built upon satisfactorily. Personal development continues to be good, with some strong features. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good overall, although there are exceptions in a small minority of classes. Some older pupils are concerned about silly behaviour interfering with learning in lessons. Also, although pupils feel safe most of the time, they are not confident that staff will always deal promptly with misbehaviour or bullying in the playground at lunchtimes. There have been no exclusions in recent months. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and their positive attitudes are reflected in the good attendance figures.

Social development is good: pupils collaborate well with each other, and even young pupils are often able to work independently of the teacher. Most pupils welcome the opportunity to show responsibility and enjoy helping each other. They enjoy acting as “playground friends” and collecting for charity. Pupils believe that the recently elected school council is already making a difference to their environment. Most of the older pupils have a sound understanding of other faiths and cultures and appreciate the value of assemblies and lessons which help them to develop their personal and social skills. They understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and talk knowledgeably about developments in healthy eating, for example in the school canteen. Pupils appreciate having access to more drinking water, but would welcome the provision of more sports clubs as an additional way of helping them to be healthy. Improving the standards of younger pupils is helping to prepare them better for the next stage of their education.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is improving slowly. Pupils’ achievement reflects the inconsistency of teaching across the school. There are too many inadequate lessons in Years 3 and 4 and teaching in the Foundation Stage is not as good as it was. Teaching is stronger in the Key Stage 1 classes.

Since the arrival of the new acting headteacher there have been further good improvements in the classroom environments. Classrooms are now better designed to support learning with bright, attractive and interactive displays. The walls are covered in good prompts to help teachers as well as pupils to remember how teaching and learning can be enhanced. Pupils are now making more use of the helpful pyramids of punctuation to remember conventions they should be using. Although there has been some improvement in the teaching of key vocabulary, too many teachers do not ensure that pupils make sufficient use of key words during lessons or understand the meaning of these words.

There is a noticeable improvement in the level of pupils’ engagement and enjoyment of lessons. Teachers are using interactive whiteboards well to motivate pupils. In an outstanding lesson in Year 1, pupils were learning about money and were all involved in practical activities. Some were manipulating the interactive board and others were demonstrating the sums using large coins on a separate smaller board.

More teachers now use paired talk well in order to develop pupils’ thinking and confidence. They also use questioning more effectively. There are however, still too many occasions when teachers give pupils information before finding out what they already know, or could work out for themselves.

Most teachers are now able to communicate very clearly to pupils what they are learning and how they will know if they have learned what they should. They are also able to demonstrate tasks and new learning effectively. Although most teaching assistants are better informed about what they should be doing than they were, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of the guidance they receive from teachers. Consequently the quality of the support they offer to pupils is inconsistent and in a small minority of cases this is weak.

Although the overall behaviour of pupils is good, those pupils who are usually good sometimes begin to behave less well when teachers talk for too long or provide activities that do not engage their interest. The use of mundane worksheets has reduced since the previous monitoring visit, but there are still too many weaknesses in too many lessons. This is often linked to teachers' limited subject knowledge, but even where this is at least satisfactory the pace of weaker lessons is too slow and the expectations of what pupils can achieve is too low especially for the more able. Consequently pupils do not always work as hard or achieve as well as they could.

There has not yet been enough progress in the use of assessment information to inform planning. Assessment information is not yet sufficiently accurate to give teachers enough information to pitch lessons at the right level. There is also insufficient day to day assessment of pupils' progress and understanding to inform the planning of subsequent lessons. Marking has improved but the quality through the school is still too variable. Where it is best, it is linked to learning objectives, identifies exactly what it is pupils have done well and what they can do to further improve. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to follow up comments made or for pupils to pursue longer term targets.

The school focus has been on improving teaching and there has not yet been time to address curriculum weaknesses. The leadership team hopes to work on medium term and cross-curricular planning shortly. There have already been further improvements in teachers' short term planning, particularly for literacy. However there have been no improvements in Foundation Stage planning and the recording of day to day assessments in these classes is weak. The issues highlighted in the last monitoring visit for the Foundation Stage have not been addressed.

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

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

## Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has quickly gained the respect and confidence of staff in a relatively short space of time. This has helped the staff to continue to build on most of the work from the time of the previous acting headteacher, although the progress in some areas has been too slow. There is now a greater level of challenge for staff and this is raising their expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result teachers are setting more challenging end of year targets. However, they have yet to embed the teaching and learning strategies to help ensure that pupils all make sufficiently good progress.

The restructure of the senior leadership team as well as a review of their respective roles and responsibilities is providing a more focused approach to school improvement. An increase in levels of self-evaluation is enabling the vast majority of senior leaders to develop an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders are all feeling more empowered and appreciate the increased levels of delegation and responsibility. They are working well as a team and providing each other with appropriate levels of support and challenge.

Although senior leaders and managers now recognise their need to help drive school improvement, they have yet to fully develop the skills they require to do this effectively. Nevertheless, some leaders are beginning to provide a clear sense of direction, particularly in literacy with the introduction of a rigorous phonics programme and the improvements made in planning. Furthermore, having previously identified the need to improve the quality of marking in the school there has been some progress in this area, although this still requires further improvement.

There is now a formal expectation that senior leaders will produce action plans, but these have yet to be completed. A minority of the leadership team have undertaken monitoring activities which included lesson observations and the analysis of data. This led to the further developments and improvements in the quality of planning for literacy.

There have also been some improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly at Key Stage 1 and this in turn has led to a rise in standards for

pupils in this phase. However, the quality of monitoring is not always sufficiently rigorous. It does not include sufficiently explicit judgements about standards and progress, and points for development are not always sufficiently clear.

At a management level, the school has improved its systems for gathering and analysing data. This is enabling the school to set realistic and challenging targets, but this has yet to filter down into classroom practice or feed into an updated development plan.

The former and current acting headteachers as well as the interim executive board (IEB) and the local authority have all worked effectively together to enable the school to make satisfactory progress in complying with health and safety regulations and legal requirements. The school has taken reasonable steps to improve the vast majority of areas identified in the health and safety report and action plan. There are now appropriate plans to undertake annual risk assessments and to ensure an appropriate level of health and safety is maintained.

The IEB is developing its role slowly but steadily. The local authority has provided support and training to members of the IEB. This is helping them to raise questions about important issues which will help the school to improve. However, the IEB have yet to provide the school with consistently good levels of challenge.

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

- Implement rigorous self-evaluation procedures that will enable the school to identify and implement appropriate targets for improvement - satisfactory progress

Progress on the additional priorities identified for further improvement in the first monitoring inspection report March 2006:

- Leaders and managers at all levels to develop their leadership roles – satisfactory progress
- To ensure the school complies fully with all health and safety and legal requirements – satisfactory progress

## External support

The local authority is providing the school with satisfactory support. The main support since the previous monitoring visit has been in securing the services

of another experienced acting headteacher as well as helping the IEB to develop their role. However, the support for teaching staff has not been as rigorous and requires a more coordinated approach and a sharper focus on the key areas in need of improvement.

Staff have benefited from receiving written feedback following external support. This has been co-ordinated well by the acting headteacher and helped to prevent staff receiving mixed messages; however, there are at times, delays in staff receiving written reports from external consultants.

### 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 the IEB and the Senior Education Officer for the Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier  
H M Inspector