



18 October 2006

The Headteacher  
Riddings Junior School  
Church Street  
Alfreton  
Derbyshire  
DE55 4BW

Dear Mrs Littlewood,

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF RIDDINGS JUNIOR SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Krishan Sharma, Additional Inspector, to your school on 27 -28 September 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with groups of Year 3 and Year 6 children, the headteacher, members of the senior management team, the chair of governors and a representative from the Local Authority (LA).

### Context

The headteacher was absent from school from 4 September due to illness and resigned on the 12 September. A seconded headteacher took up the post of headteacher on 25 September two days before this monitoring inspection. The Deputy Headteacher had increased her contract to 0.9 of full time equivalent (fte) but reverted to 0.6 from 1 September 2006. The Assistant Headteacher returned on the 4 June to take up a .6 fte post.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement is improving but not at the rate at which it needs to be. The school's own information indicates that many children are doing as well as they should, but a significant number are not. Children's progress is particularly inconsistent in mathematics across the school. As a result of greater focus and improved teaching, there has been clear improvement in writing that is reflected in better results in the 2006 national tests. The standards of presentation in children's work have improved and are now satisfactory.

Standards remain below average. The latest test results for 11-year-olds in 2006 show that standards are below the provisional national averages in English, mathematics and science. In comparison with the previous year, they represent an upward trend in English, particularly in writing but no significant improvement in mathematics and science. Standards in mathematics remain a concern for the school as is the performance of those pupils who are capable of working at a level that is higher than average.

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

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics and writing – inadequate progress.

## Personal development and well-being

Children's personal development continues to be satisfactory. They enjoy school and show an interest in their lessons, even in those that they find less engaging. Children's behaviour in and around the school is good. The progress towards providing greater opportunities for children to use initiative in their own work has been slow. There is currently only one extra-curricular activity that takes place in school and therefore opportunities to enrich the curriculum are missed.

## Quality of provision

Teaching is now satisfactory with pockets of good teaching. Although this overall picture of satisfactory teaching reflects improvement there are still some elements of teaching that are inadequate. During the monitoring inspection inadequate teaching was seen.

In good lessons teaching is lively, interesting and effectively challenges children. In these lessons competent teaching, using good subject knowledge, is key to making sure that children made good progress. Another feature of these lessons is an effective balance of teaching strategies used,

challenging activities and time and support provided for children to complete substantial amounts of work.

In many lessons broadly satisfactory teaching is not helping children to make as much progress as they need to. Too often the pace of learning is slowed because whole class teaching is overused. This prevents children having enough time to complete independent or group tasks so that they can consolidate their learning. Planning is detailed but in many cases fails to identify opportunities to ensure that what is taught meets the range of children's abilities in each lesson. To some extent the setting in English and mathematics helps to ensure work is better matched but beyond this there is little done to further fine tune teaching. For example, too often, insufficient attention is given to ensuring questions, discussions or tasks are matched to children's abilities throughout the lesson. Setting, and the fact that groups of children are taught by a number of teachers, is also making teaching less effective because teachers have not built up a picture of children's abilities that will inform their teaching across all subjects.

Arrangements for regular assessment of children's performance in English and mathematics are in place. Although the use of assessment is improving trends in the achievement of groups of children has not been identified clearly. Assessment of children's on-going progress in lessons varies in quality. In successful lessons, teachers comment precisely on what children have done well and where they need to improve. Invariably these comments relate to what the children were expected to learn. Yet, in some other lessons, comments made are infrequent and lack clear diagnosis. Evidence in children's English books shows that marking has improved. In mathematics there is some improvement but comments to help children understand what they have to do next to improve are underused. Children are insufficiently skilled in making assessment of their own work as often they do not have a clear idea how to go about it.

Throughout the school children's behaviour is good and this helps them to learn. This good behaviour is fostered through very positive relationships between staff and children. Children are often keen to follow instructions and when teaching is lively and interesting and activities matched well to children's needs children respond with enthusiasm.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring lessons are well planned and have good pace and challenge for all – satisfactory progress.

- Develop a rigorous target setting, assessment and tracking procedure to inform planning and regularly monitor pupils' progress through school – satisfactory progress.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management remain inadequate. Since the last monitoring inspection little has been done to steer the school in the direction that will secure the improvement that is needed. The decision to second a headteacher from a nearby school for two terms has the potential to improve matters but much has to be done. At the time of the inspection visit the seconded head had only been in school two days and therefore evidence of her effectiveness will need to be evaluated at a later date. Up to now the absence of a united vision for the school has been a barrier to success for the senior management team. Adding to this weakness there has been a lack of clarity of the responsibilities for each member of the team. The new seconded head is aware of the history of inadequate effectiveness and plans to address this by making the senior management team more accountable.

The Literacy and Numeracy co-ordinators have continued to develop their roles and have just begun to monitor teaching and learning working along side LA consultants. This work is recent and there is still some way to go before a robust and systematic leadership of these areas will have an impact on raising standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

The Governors have become more involved in holding the school to account. They appreciate the magnitude of the task ahead and have high expectations.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels so there is a clear direction – inadequate progress.
- Use rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures to identify areas where improvement is needed and take effective action to remedy the shortcomings – inadequate progress.

## External support

LA support for the school continues but has had limited impact on the progress the school has made. There have been a number of management issues in the school that have taken some time to deal with which have slowed down the pace of change. For example, discussions between the senior management team and the LA identified actions to be undertaken by the school. However senior management failed to ensure that these actions

were undertaken. The LA accept that the school has made overall inadequate progress since the last visit and has plans for continued intensive support.

### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Improve teaching so that all is at least securely satisfactory and greater proportions are good and better. Focus more on effectively matching teaching and the tasks given to children throughout lessons so as to provide sufficient challenge for the range of ability groups.
- As a matter of urgency, create a united senior management team that have clear roles and responsibilities focused on improving standards, teaching and learning.
- Identify ways of ensuring governors and staff at all levels can explicitly measure the impact of their contribution to school improvement.
- Improve the process of assessment so that it is more streamlined and informs teaching and management decisions in the school.

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

Yours sincerely



Andrew Cook  
H M Inspector