



26 March 2007

Mr Steve 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 Susan Rogers, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 March 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held discussions with the acting headteacher, the senior leadership team, the leaders with responsibility for leading and managing special educational needs, the Foundation Stage leader as well as curriculum leaders for literacy, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). Discussions were also held with pupils as well as the attached link inspector and representatives from the interim executive board (IEB). Inspectors observed 13 lessons or part lessons.

Context

The school continues to have an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher in post. The IEB has agreed to advertise once again for a

substantive headteacher as the current acting headteacher is due to leave the school in July 2007.

There have been some changes to the membership of the IEB which have included the appointment of two new members. The main changes in terms of staffing have been amongst the support staff. There has also been a change in the membership of the senior leadership team.

Pupils in Year 1 are no longer taught, in vertically grouped classes. All pupils are now taught in single age classes and one of the teachers who used to teach in the Reception Year now teaches one of the Year 1 classes.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are rising although not consistently well throughout the school. The historical weaknesses are more apparent especially with the slower rate of progress being made by some older pupils. A real success story is the recent implementation of a synthetic phonics programme, which is having a very positive impact on standards in reading, with spelling and reading ages increasingly dramatically for all pupils in a very short space of time.

The overall rate of progress in English, particularly in reading is better than it is in mathematics. The majority of pupils at Key Stage 1 are making good and better overall progress in English and mathematics than pupils in Key Stage 2. Consequently, most of the pupils Years 1 and 2 are already meeting their targets and many have been predicted to exceed these by the end of the academic year. However, some pupils in Year 1 are currently unlikely to meet their predicted targets for reading and mathematics, and many pupils in Year 4 are unlikely to meet their targets for writing. Girls continue to do better than boys in English and mathematics by the end of Years 2 and 4. Where there is evidence of underachievement, this is largely due to a legacy of inadequate teaching in the past, but in some cases this is also due to some current weaknesses in teaching.

Although there is some satisfactory provision in the Foundation Stage, the overall progress of children in this year group is now inadequate. Furthermore, the overall level of enjoyment of pupils in this year group is now noticeably less good than that of learners in the rest of the school.

The school has developed a satisfactory system for collecting and analysing data. This is now being used to track and monitor the progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, the school is now able to identify underachievement more accurately, raise teachers'

expectations of what pupils can achieve and set more realistic and challenging targets. The school's data now highlights the difference in the performance of girls and boys in every year group; it also shows very clearly that while pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are progressing this is often at a slower rate compared with that of their peers, especially in writing and mathematics.

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

This area was not inspected on this occasion.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is improving at a satisfactory rate. There is more evidence of additional challenge for higher attaining pupils, although this still requires additional improvement. Useful training initiatives have ensured that teachers are now more able to accelerate pupils' learning by reviewing and refining their own practice. The use of assessment information to inform planning has also improved. However, pupils' progress remains uneven because teaching is too variable. Teaching continues to be good in Key Stage 1, but there is not yet enough good teaching in the Key Stage 2 classes. One inadequate lesson was seen in each of these key stages. Both lessons seen in the Foundation Stage were inadequate.

There have been improvements in behaviour management and pupils' attitudes. Pupils are consistently well behaved and responsive, with the exception of the Foundation Stage. Here the children are not sufficiently engaged and flit from one activity to another without understanding that they are there to learn and that learning can be fun. The Foundation Stage environment has improved. It is more spacious and better organised. The quality of planning has also improved. However, teaching here is inadequate because assessment is poor. As a result, the work is not well matched to the ability of the children. The tasks do not relate sufficiently to the learning objectives and the children do not spend enough time talking about what they might learn.

The use of interactive whiteboards to motivate pupils continues to improve. The teachers' improved skills in making links between subjects, reinforces basic skills and makes learning more meaningful. In a good Year 1 design

technology lesson pupils learned to plan by designing colourful fruit faces and involved learning about healthy eating by tasting fruit. The lesson was used well to extend pupils' vocabulary and to increase their awareness of the needs of others. Most lessons now ensure that pupils have opportunities to talk to each other and to work together.

However, even good teachers do not apply their good skills consistently well. Pace is excellent in some lessons. However, it is weak in others with pupils complaining that 'we have to sit so long that we want to fall asleep' at times. Key vocabulary is displayed, very well reinforced and referred to in some lessons and not at all in others. Some planning makes very good use of classroom computers to support learning. Conversely, not enough use is made of computers to draft writing in English lessons. This results in missed opportunities to engage reluctant writers. Teachers' knowledge also varies from very good to weak. Activities are usually exciting and practical, but in weaker lessons they are often dull and not thought out well enough to support learning.

Training in assessment has paid dividends. Teachers are now making good use of assessment information to set targets for pupils on a regular basis. Most, but not all, pupils know what their targets are, although they do not always understand them. Pupils report that they now spend much more time talking about their work and evaluating it using 'two stars and a wish'. This evaluation is not yet evident in the marking, which is still inconsistent. Teachers are generally now assessing the pupils' progress on a day to day basis so that they can amend their planning appropriately.

Assessment and tracking of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory. However, teaching and support staff do not all take sufficient account of targets included within well devised individual education plans to inform lesson plans. There are also missed learning opportunities for these pupils during class based lessons. This is contributing to the slower rate of progress being made by some pupils particularly those with a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Better guidance is being developed for classroom assistants; however, this has yet to impact sufficiently on the quality of their work with these pupils.

The vast majority of teachers are making good use of assessments procedures to track and monitor pupils' progress in developing phonological skills. Teachers amend their planning accordingly to take account of pupils' needs in this aspect of their learning. This is contributing the good improvements in reading and spelling.

The learning environment in the school has improved still further as teachers are consistently making very good use of attractive displays. They are also beginning to take more account of pupils' knowledge before and after a module of learning. Learning objectives are also consistently displayed, but are not always clear enough. 'Remember to' prompts remind pupils of the expected features of learning and are a very good innovation. However, they are not always sufficiently detailed and too many teachers do not demonstrate their use regularly or well enough. As a result, self and peer evaluation is not yet as effective as it could be.

There have been good improvements in the development of curriculum design and planning. Curriculum overviews for each year group make clear links between subjects. New medium term planning ensures coverage of the statutory curriculum and provides an improving match of work to different abilities of pupils.

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 – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The improvements made to the quality of leadership and management have contributed to the satisfactory progress since the last monitoring visit, in the quality of teaching and learning as well as the rise in standards particularly in reading. There is now a shared sense of responsibility amongst senior leaders and a commitment to work as a team to help the school to improve. However, senior leaders are still in the process of developing the skills they require to do this more effectively. They are monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning satisfactorily. Although they are beginning to make judgements about standards and progress they have yet to do this without the support of local authority advisers.

Senior leaders and managers are now producing action plans, rooted in self-evaluation, which are feeding into the school's overall development plan. Staff now have a good sense of ownership of the new school development plan because of their contribution and involvement in the process of drafting this document. However, the structure and content of action and development plans require further improvement. There is currently insufficient detail about how improvements will be made and there are not enough references to quantifiable measurable success criteria. Detail about when progress towards targets will be monitored or by who is also at times

lacking. Although key actions are clear, the plans do not include sufficient information about the intended outcomes for learners or the anticipated impact on standards. There is also insufficient focus on strategies to support the needs of different groups of learners.

The school is making better use of data, which is helping leaders and managers to gain a more accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However this level of information is not included within action and development planning. Nevertheless, the quality of the information the school now has is enabling leaders and managers to identify appropriate targets for improvement.

The IEB is developing its role well and has been significantly strengthened since the time of the last monitoring visit. There is now a sharper focus on evaluating the quality the school's work and the impact this is having on learners and raising standards. Consequently, the IEB now recognise the need for more information about the progress being made by different groups of learners. Although the IEB has started to work more closely with the school, staff would welcome a greater level of involvement. Subject leaders in particular, would welcome being linked to a member or curriculum group from the IEB.

The IEB is aware of the school's financial situation and the risk of a deficit budget in the next financial year. However, they have not decided on the best way forward and have yet to ensure that the school is providing acceptable value for money. The IEB does not ensure that it complies with all its statutory duties sufficiently well.

The uncertainty surrounding the long term leadership of the school is causing some anxiety amongst staff. The current situation is also making the capacity for the school to continue to improve beyond July 2007 fragile. The reliance on the headteacher to drive improvements is decreasing slowly. However, he is still the key person helping to steer the school in the right direction even though senior leaders are now contributing more to the pace of improvement.

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 – This aspect was not inspected fully on this occasion.

External support

The quality of support from the LA has improved, but remains satisfactory. The link inspector has continued to meet with the acting headteacher on a regular basis to review the progress of the school, support the work of the leadership team and the production of the new school development plan. She has also been instrumental in recruiting the new members of the IEB. There has been satisfactory support from the Primary Strategy team. The most significant impact of their work has been in the development of assessment information to support learning. However, this has been embedded more in some classes than in others.

Staff now receive more timely feedback following visits by external consultants and support has been more sharply focused on key areas for improvements.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

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

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier
H M Inspector