

2 July 2007

Mrs Jeanette Adak
The Headteacher
Chalgrove Primary School
Chalgrove Gardens
Finchley
London
N3 3PL

Dear Mrs Adak

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CHALGROVE SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Charalambous Loizou, Additional Inspector to your school on 19 and 20 June 2007, 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 October 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 observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, parents, the chair and vice chair of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Following the departure of the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher has been appointed to the post of acting deputy headteacher. A shadow governing body has been appointed and attended its first interim executive board meeting on 6 June 2007.

Achievement and standards

Pupils are making satisfactory progress overall in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and in lessons. Progress is best where teaching is consistently

good. Nevertheless, there are some pupils who are not making the progress they should.

Personal development and well-being

Teachers and support staff have good relationships with pupils, who say they enjoy school. The school complies with the regulations in relation to the safe recruitment of staff. It has addressed a minor safeguarding training issue raised at the last monitoring inspection but another remains outstanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The impact of support from the local authority is evident in a broadening of teaching approaches. There is greater use of discussion activities which extend pupils' thinking and help them to explain their ideas more precisely. There is an increased focus on taking into account pupils' previous learning when planning lessons, although assessment information is not used precisely enough to match work to each pupil's needs.

The quality of teaching varies widely. The better teaching involves pupils well in activities that challenge them to think hard. Pupils settle down quickly at the start of lessons, but they often spend too long listening to explanations or on whole-class activities so do not extend their learning enough. A barrier to all students making better progress is that work does not challenge them enough, particularly the higher attainers. Teachers do not take sufficient opportunity to check how well each pupil is doing during the lesson, in order to give extra help or harder work.

Pupils have been given targets in literacy and numeracy, and some have recently received targets for science. However, these long term targets are broad and address only some parts of the subject. Pupils do not have regularly updated targets against which they and their teachers can check their progress. They are not clear how their learning in lessons fits in with their overall progress. Pupils and parents are not clear about the levels at which pupils are working.

There are improvements in the use of assessment but there is still a long way to go to support all students to make the progress they are capable of. Teachers take more account of assessment in their planning. They are gaining in confidence in making overall assessments against National Curriculum levels in English and mathematics, but this is slow in science. A system is now in place for carrying out these assessments at the end of the year. This term, the national optional tests have been used more accurately to record attainment. Assessment in the Foundation Stage is also more accurate. However, assessment systems focus on attainment and are not used to show up easily or frequently enough the progress that each pupil is making, for example to enable the progress of higher attainers to be monitored and extended. Pupils and parents do not know the levels the pupils are working at.

There are improvements in the system for monitoring and developing teaching quality. An improved lesson observation form has focused observations more on pupils' progress and contributed to greater accuracy in judgement of teaching quality. Nevertheless, the design of the form does not ensure that pupils' progress is evaluated or that judgments are made on the extent of improvement on areas for development. Lesson observation itself is more focused on areas previously identified for improvement and tables have been devised to link these areas to some professional development. Together they have contributed to improvements in teaching, although the tables lack the precision in identifying incremental improvement and targeted professional development that would enable the impact of the system to be evaluated and challenged effectively.

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

- improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure consistency and improvement in the quality of teaching – satisfactory progress
- sharpen the way teachers use assessment to accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school and raise standards – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There have been improvements in some key aspects of the work of the leadership team. The interim headteacher has provided a measure of stability at a time of change and has improved communication with parents. She has raised staff morale and fostered a positive approach to school improvement. Her decisive, yet supportive, approach to leadership has given the staff the confidence to reflect on their work and a willingness to improve further. Staff are now clearer about their role in relation to raising achievement by focusing their teaching on pupils' progress. The interim executive board has taken effective and timely action to start the process of appointing a permanent headteacher to take over from the interim headteacher when she returns to her school in January 2008.

The appointment of an acting deputy headteacher has strengthened the school's leadership capacity, although there is still some way to go to distribute responsibilities further because of the relative inexperience of the staff across the school and temporary appointments to some posts. The senior leadership team comprises the interim headteacher and acting deputy headteacher who have a good working relationship and are focused on school improvement. They have worked effectively with the staff, the interim executive board and the local authority to clarify roles and responsibilities. Consequently, staff are becoming clearer about how their work contributes to pupils' achievement. There is now a sound staffing structure, with some job descriptions, but this is being amended in the light of difficulties in appointing to some posts. Job descriptions for support staff are being reviewed with them to update their responsibilities appropriately. A robust internal appointment has been made to the newly designated post of responsibility for mathematics.

Some responsibilities are held temporarily, and longer term arrangements for them remain uncertain. The interim headteacher is leading on science. The school has appointed an experienced teacher to co-ordinate the support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities this term and another for next term. Management of provision for these pupils has improved since last term and parents report more transparent communication with the school on ways it is meeting their children's needs.

Parents say they are now more confident that they can approach the headteacher if they have any concerns or issues and that these will be dealt with. However, there are some ongoing concerns, in particular about the uncertainty of future leadership and staffing. Parents receive information about the work their children will be doing in the coming term but want more detail so that they can help them. Parents now receive targets in literacy and numeracy but want more information about their children's attainment and progress, and to be sure that it is good enough.

The school benefits from the external support provided by the local authority, including the advanced skilled teachers who work alongside teachers. However, the school remains largely dependent on that support in order to move forward, particularly in improving the impact of the teaching on pupils' achievements.

The interim executive board has been decisive in improving staffing. It has challenged the school in addressing the issues raised during inspections. It has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. However, there is still more to do in challenging the improvements on the key issues on teaching and assessment.

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

- improve the school leadership team so that leaders work together effectively and are capable of driving forward school improvement – satisfactory progress
- improve school management such that all staff are clear about what needs to be done to accelerate achievement – satisfactory progress
- improve communication so that parents feel confident in the leadership of the school – satisfactory progress

External support

The local authority's sound support has had a clear impact on raising teachers' confidence, broadening their teaching styles, sharpening their lesson planning, and increasing their understanding of the role of assessment. It has also improved the impact of monitoring of teaching on the quality of teaching. Nevertheless, its summary evaluation of this could be sharper and more closely related to the robustness of the monitoring process. The local authority's reported action on assessment reflects clearly its support for the use of assessment in teaching but shows less support for tracking of individual and group progress. Use of assessment, particularly in science, needs further support.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

The appointment of one newly qualified teacher has been agreed but further newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the interim executive board and the Director of Education for Barnet.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close
H M Inspector