

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



12 November 2007

Mrs V Cranton
The Headteacher
Gorse Hill Community Primary School
Hollymount Road
Worcester
Worcestershire
WR4 9SG

Dear Mrs Cranton

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GORSE HILL
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Joanna Pike and Clive Lewis, Additional Inspectors, to your school on Wednesday 31 October and Thursday 1 November 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 March 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – broadly satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to further consultation with HMI before any appointments are made. This particularly relates to the school's selection of an appropriate mentor and induction tutor.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF GORSE HILL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 31 October and 1 November
2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, talked with groups of pupils, and met with the headteacher, an assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the coordinator for the pupils who speak English as an additional language and the literacy and mathematics coordinators.

Context

At the end of the summer term 2007 one teacher retired, one resigned and two other teachers left to take up posts in other schools. The governors and headteacher recruited two assistant headteachers and three teachers to start work at the school on 1 September 2007. Subsequently one of the assistant headteachers resigned on 11 September. Three new teaching assistants also joined the school at the beginning of the autumn term 2007 and one other teaching assistant started work at the school on Monday 29 October. The deputy headteacher, who has been absent on long term sick leave, is currently deployed by the local authority (LA) at another school in the county. Another teacher has been seconded to the school as acting deputy headteacher. She joined the school on Monday 29 October.

Achievement and standards

The results of the 2007 national tests for 11 year olds show that pupils' achievement overall is significantly impeded by their slow progress in English and low standards in writing. Nevertheless, there were encouraging signs in mathematics, where standards in the tests were above the national average and pupils' progress was broadly satisfactory. The 2007 test results for seven year old pupils reflected low standards in reading, writing and mathematics which were below the national average. The school's assessment information for the end of the academic year 2007 shows that in each year group from Year 2 to Year 6 the majority of pupils made satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics. A significant proportion of pupils achieved very well in reading and mathematics. Nevertheless, standards overall remain very low. Just over a third of the pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are currently working at the level expected for their age. Standards in writing are extremely low with only 24% reaching the level expected for their age. Standards in handwriting, spelling and sentence structure are poor. A scrutiny of the pupils' books shows that progress in writing is very slow in Years 1, 2 and 3, generally satisfactory in Year 4 and then accelerates in Years 5 and 6.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- improve achievement and raise standards in English and mathematics by accelerating the rate of pupils' progress in both subjects – satisfactory progress in mathematics but inadequate progress to raise standards in writing.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils respond well when their work is interesting and challenging, although many are easily distracted and often struggle to sustain concentration. Behaviour around the school, in corridors and on the playground is generally safe and satisfactory.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching in most lessons is satisfactory. Some of the teaching is good, for example when the pupils' behaviour is managed well and the steps pupils need to take to achieve the learning objective for a lesson are shared and understood; and when opportunities for the pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills are used effectively to help pupils structure their thinking, particularly in Years 5 and 6. However, there is not enough teaching which inspires and challenges the pupils to achieve more. Although teachers are beginning to be more effective in their use of success criteria these are not always translated into step by step sequenced learning tasks to help the pupils achieve success, particularly in writing. Insufficient time is given to showing pupils what they are expected to learn and how they will be supported in their learning. Similarly, there are too many occasions during the pupils' independent activities when pupils quickly lose concentration and are easily distracted. Currently, teachers' assessments in writing are too infrequent, insufficiently rigorous, and not used well enough to inform lesson planning.

The quality of provision for the pupils who speak English as an additional language and for the pupils who have special educational needs is good. The good leadership of the coordinators ensures that these pupils are taught effectively in most lessons and their progress and achievement are carefully monitored and evaluated. Teaching assistants give good support in lessons, helping pupils make sound progress in literacy and numeracy.

Most pupils know their curricular targets in writing, reading and mathematics. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In some year groups, for example in Years 2 and 3, teachers identify the next steps the pupils need to make to achieve their target. However, this is not yet a consistent feature across the school.

The quality of teaching and learning in the Young Explorers Unit, for pupils in Reception and Year 1, has improved and is satisfactory. The Unit is resourced well and there is an attractive and stimulating learning environment. Teachers' planning has improved and is generally satisfactory. However, currently the pupils spend too long choosing unstructured tasks without sufficient good quality adult intervention, supervision and guidance. There is an imbalance in the time allocated to the direct teaching of basic skills and to the pupils' independent activities. As a result their learning is impeded and time is wasted unnecessarily. Many of the pupils do not yet have the social and academic skills to make informed choices or understand what they are expected to learn in free play activities. This leads to pupils wandering

aimlessly both in the classroom and the outdoor area and to occasions where their safety is at risk.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- improve the quality of teaching by requiring all teachers to use assessment information properly to assist their planning and target setting – broadly satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has produced a helpful self-evaluation of progress, which identifies what is going well and what still needs to be done to ensure improvements are made in all year groups. There is also a useful development plan which sets out how the school is tackling its key areas for improvement and how the impact of actions will be evaluated in relation to pupils' achievements. These are helpful documents but are not yet sufficiently reflected in actions which are making a strong, sustainable and measurable difference in tackling the school's most pressing priorities. These include, for example, raising standards in writing, improving pupils' attitudes to learning, eliminating incidences of low level disruption in lessons, and ensuring that teaching and learning are consistently good in all year groups. Not enough has been done to identify the key weaknesses in writing and set out a coherent and strategic plan to show how the weaknesses are expected to be eliminated and standards raised. This is a matter of the utmost urgency and should be tackled with a renewed sense of energy and focus.

Improvements have been made to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. There is a helpful overview of when monitoring activities are to take place and who is responsible for leading them. The written feedback to teachers has improved and review dates for checking progress are clearly identified. Many of the teachers' targets for improvement are helpful and more carefully focused on pupils' learning experiences. However, further work is required to ensure that all senior teachers have a clear understanding of the difference between the pupils' achievement in lessons and the standards they are working at. Similarly, some targets are still too broad and it is not always clear how effective teaching contributes positively to the pupils' progress and their achievements in lessons.

Arrangements for managing and improving the pupils' behaviour and their attitudes are satisfactory. Teachers often show considerable patience and calm when dealing with poor or challenging behaviour. Nevertheless, the school has not yet achieved a sufficiently strong ethos for learning among the majority of pupils and much of the pupils' positive behaviour relies heavily on the visible presence of adults.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2006:

- improve the quality of leadership and management by establishing greater rigour in the checks made on teaching and learning to ensure that they are always strongly focused on raising standards – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide a range of generally satisfactory support in line with its statement of action. A useful action plan has been produced to guide the work of local authority advisers and consultants during the autumn term. Some of the local authority support has been helpful in consolidating stability in senior management, although less success has been achieved in raising standards in writing and reaching the local authority's own target of 60% good teaching in the school by 1 November 2007.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards in writing.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning, particularly when working independently.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.
- Set out a clear and strategic plan to urgently tackle the most pressing priorities, including in the Young Explorers Unit