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

Dear Mrs Adak

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CHALGROVE SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 November 2007, 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 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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

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 and the monitoring inspection report 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

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF CHALGROVE SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 6 and 7 November 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, groups of parents and individual parents, the chair of the parents' association, the chair of the interim executive board and a representative from the local authority.

Context

A permanent headteacher has been appointed and will take up the post in January 2008. A permanent co-ordinator of support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities has also been appointed; she will take up the post from January 2008 and is already working in the school for one day per week. A new temporary co-ordinator has joined the school for this term only. The acting deputy head teacher has been appointed as permanent deputy headteacher. A new member of staff has taken over the role of subject leader for science, which was held previously by the interim headteacher. Membership of the governing body is almost fully in place to take over from the interim executive board on 28 November 2007, and provides substantial continuity.

Achievement and standards

Pupils who took the Key Stage 2 tests in 2007 made particularly good progress. Standards have risen at Key Stage 2 where they are well above average. They have also risen in the Foundation Stage although they remain below average in writing and in linking sounds and letters. At Key Stage 1, standards remain below average, with writing being the weakest area. Assessments made at the end of each year show that annual progress for some pupils is less than it should be.

Personal development and well-being

This area was not inspected on this occasion.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is improving. The school's priorities of using assessment and providing challenge for higher attainers are more evident in lessons. Planning for lessons is increasingly informed by pupils' performance in earlier work. Teaching is meeting pupils' needs more effectively and involving them more in evaluating their own performance. Learning objectives and success criteria are used more consistently to focus teachers and pupils jointly on the purpose of the lesson. Teachers and teaching assistants are checking more carefully how pupils are doing during the lesson and adapting teaching accordingly, although this is not done consistently. Consequently, some pupils spend time stuck, are given work that is too easy or spend too much time listening. There is more consistent setting of homework linked to class work.

Support and monitoring are identifying ways in which satisfactory teaching can be improved and are helping it to do so, but this is a gradual process. The local authority link officer has carried out more focused joint observations with school staff which include evaluations of the progress made on areas for development that were identified previously. This structure is contributing to improvement. Nevertheless, the school has not carried out sufficiently frequent focused lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work or monitoring of planning of all of the staff that teach classes to support speedy improvement in specific areas, such as ensuring challenge. The improved lesson observation form assists professional development but the evaluation of progress is not precise enough to convey its quality or the subject detail of the evidence of progress.

There have been improvements in science provision following the recent support from the local authority for teaching, for making assessments against the National Curriculum, and for leading and managing the subject. Pupils have enjoyed practical investigative work in science and collaborated very keenly on it. Staff have received the support enthusiastically. However, short term follow up is needed in order to extend development in teaching and assessment, in particular in time to inform the end of term reports.

This term, there have been improvements in the use of assessment following substantial changes in procedures. Many of them are newly in place so have not yet had time to make a significant impact on teaching and pupils' progress. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 now have class learning targets for mathematics, English and science against which they and the teachers evaluate attainment. These have recently been used effectively, in discussion with pupils, to draw up related individual targets that more closely match the needs of all attainers. Parents have found useful the evaluations of the first half term's work against the class targets and the provision of class and individual targets for the current half term. It is too early to evaluate the impact of these individual targets on teaching and pupils' progress. Teachers are more consistently recording a wide range of assessment information and teaching assistants are more involved in contributing to assessment against objectives, including in the Foundation Stage. Greater use is being made of the local authority's tracking package and electronic Foundation Stage profiling. Staff would benefit from more support in using them interactively so they can use their features more effectively to monitor progress towards targets.

The deputy headteacher has led the development of an appropriate new reporting system, in consultation with parents, that will provide National Curriculum attainment information on English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. It will be issued each term, ensuring more regular recording of National Curriculum attainment levels and more frequent information for parents. There remains a need for further support for staff in making judgements at the end of each term when they are not informed by end of year tests. Until a termly record of National Curriculum attainment against targets for each pupil for each year is in place, its impact on improving progress, including for potential higher attainers, cannot be evaluated. This term, assessment records have been used effectively to identify groups of underachieving pupils to receive support.

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
- sharpen the way teachers use assessment to accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school and raise standards – good

Leadership and management

It is good that the school has been able to make substantive appointments of experienced staff to the posts of headteacher and co-ordinator of support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. The good team work of the current senior management team lays a firm foundation for continuity. Through hard work and commitment, it has successfully raised the confidence and morale of the staff to move forward. The new temporary co-ordinator of support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is making a good impact on the management of provision for these pupils. Parents welcome these improvements and the opportunity to discuss support for their children that is provided by group meetings. Structures for supporting pupils at early stages of learning English are being developed. Appointments of experienced people have been made to the governing body and continuity is planned with the interim executive board. All of these developments lay a good foundation for effective collaborative leadership, but until the permanent leadership is in place, it is too soon to judge the capacity for driving the school forward and securing parental confidence.

This term, teaching and support staff feel much clearer about their role in moving the school forward and show a positive energy and focus. They have all embraced the new procedures for lesson planning and assessing but it is early to judge their impact on achievement. Teaching staff have begun to develop action plans for improvement in their areas of responsibility. These plans identify some appropriate actions but would benefit from a narrower focus, short timescales and success criteria expressed in terms of measurable impact on outcomes. As yet, subject co-ordinators are at the early stages of carrying out monitoring. There is a need to build capacity at senior management and co-coordinator level through planned allocation of time and support for a phased transfer of monitoring from the local authority.

Communication with parents has improved. Parents report greater opportunity to talk with class teachers. They welcome the information on targets and subsequent attainment of them as well as the revised homework system. Parents are making a positive impact through participating in a consultative forum, a group for parents of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and the parents' association. They have been invited to contribute their expertise and more have come in to school to share this with the pupils. Some parents who are not fluent in English have difficulty accessing the school's communications. The school has recognised the need to communicate in a wider range of languages and is beginning to address this. At present, it is too soon to gauge parents' confidence in the permanent leadership or the process of transition from the current temporary arrangements.

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 – good
- improve school management such that all staff are clear about what needs to be done to accelerate achievement – good
- improve communication so that parents feel confident in the leadership of the school – good

External support

The lead officer from the local authority has successfully brought more focus to school improvement. It has helped increase the pace of improvement but some lengthy times between monitoring or support activities and meetings, and between the activities themselves, have prevented improvement from being faster. There is a planned diminution of local authority monitoring and support, but a smoother transition to build capacity at all levels in the school is needed. The recent science support has been welcomed, but needs to be extended flexibly and rapidly to secure significant impact. The local authority's support has been sound but its statement of action does not specify support or targets for the future.