

7 December 2007

Mrs Diana Mann
Headteacher
Grimes Dyke Primary School
Stanks Drive
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS14 5BY

Dear Mrs Mann

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GRIMES DYKE SCHOOL

Following my visit with Jim Alexander, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 December 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 – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 governors and the Chief Executive for Education Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Brenda McIntosh
Additional Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF GRIMES DYKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 5-6 December 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons in each class, and scrutinised documents and pupils' work. Discussions were held with key staff, the consultant headteacher and pupils. Discussions also took place with the chair of governors, one of the additional governors and representatives from Education Leeds.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection there has been a significant turnover of staff. In July 2007, 50% of the teaching team left the school. In September 2007, five teachers were appointed, three on permanent contracts and two on temporary contracts. Almost all the staff in the Foundation Stage are new to the school or new to this phase. The teacher appointed for Year 6 in September 2007 has since resigned with effect from December 2007. For the rest of this academic year an advanced skills teacher on secondment from another school is to teach the Year 6 class. A teacher continues to be absent long term. In September 2007 the school opened a designated split-site Children's Centre. Modifications were made to the building in August 2007 meaning the entire Foundation Stage provision had to be reorganised at the start of September 2007, just as new staff took up their posts. Education Leeds has provided additional leadership capacity by appointing a consultant headteacher who took up post from the start of September 2007 for three days per week. Recruitment and retention difficulties for the school remain a concern.

The school was successfully re-validated for Inclusion Mark in November 2007 and The Stephen Lawrence Education Award was achieved in October 2007.

Achievement and standards

The school's provisional 2007 results for Key Stage 2 confirm the low standards and underachievement reported at the last monitoring inspection. This was no surprise to the school as the data that it collects on pupils' progress had already identified this picture. The teacher assessments for 2007 show an improvement in standards at the end of Key Stage 1, when compared to the 2006 results. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress has been improved further and the information is used rigorously to help accelerate progress and to pinpoint where additional support is needed. Consequently, achievement is improving across the school. The number of pupils in each year group working at the levels expected for their age continues to increase. Improvements in the rates of progress across the school in reading and writing are better than in mathematics but action is already being taken to tackle this. Boys' achievement continues to improve and the gap in attainment between boys and girls is closing. Standards for the current Year 6 are above the low levels attained by

Year 6 in 2007. Recent initiatives to improve the teaching of writing are already helping to raise standards and achievement. Despite the significant turnover of staff in the Foundation Stage, and all the disruption from alterations to the accommodation, children are still making a good start to their learning.

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

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly that of boys, in English, mathematics and science - satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

The school's efforts to improve attendance are proving successful. The learning mentors' careful monitoring ensures that pupils who have previously had difficulties with punctuality and/or attendance are well supported; this is encouraging more regular attendance. The school praises pupils who have good or improving attendance. Pupils in Year 6 were delighted to have been awarded a trophy for 100% attendance recently. The school has exceeded its target, currently reaching 94.7% attendance this term. Pupils say that the special 'attendance assemblies' encourage them, as do the awards given. But they add that they are also finding lessons 'more fun and exciting' and this, too, motivates them to attend more regularly. The school continues to provide further enrichment activities for pupils, and after-school clubs are well attended. The school has worked hard to ensure that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with effectively. Consequently, less time is taken to resolve issues and pupils are more quickly re-engaging in their learning. Pupils say, 'behaviour is much better this term, in lessons and on the playground'. This is giving them a greater sense of pride in their school community. Work undertaken by the school's inclusion team, in establishing weekly behavioural targets at a special Monday morning breakfast club, ensures that all pupils have a more settled start to the week. The number of exclusions continues to fall.

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

- Raise pupils' aspirations so that they want to attend school and believe that by attending they have the best possible chance to do well - good.

Quality of provision

The two new teachers who have responsibility for the Foundation Stage have a very clear view of what is required to improve provision and have a well-judged plan for implementation. Already much has been achieved and this is providing children with a calm, well-organised and purposeful learning environment. These young children enjoy the learning activities that are provided and respond well to the good relationships that are developing with staff.

Elsewhere in the school the newly appointed teachers have been provided with a mentor to ensure their induction is as smooth as possible. The recruitment and retention of staff, however, continue to be major issues for leaders to manage. This has slowed the progress the school has made in improving the consistency of teaching.

The quality of teaching remains similar to that at the time of the last monitoring inspection. Features of effective teaching continue to be: good relationships, which result in pupils behaving increasingly appropriately in lessons; questioning that consolidates pupils' understanding; and teachers referring to lesson objectives and differentiating tasks accordingly. Marking remains better in some classes and across some subjects than others. Some pupils have a clearer understanding of what steps need to be taken to improve their work; this good practice, however, is inconsistent and some marking offers less constructive and child-friendly feedback. There are still lessons where learning is at best satisfactory. On such occasions, teaching offers insufficient interest or challenge to pupils, particularly boys. Although all pupils are better at following instructions, a small number still do not engage in their learning as well as they could and remain passive during lessons. Pupils in better lessons can also be over-dependent on adult help; the pace of their learning slows when they are given independent tasks to complete. Teachers use targets to focus pupils' learning in literacy and mathematics, but these are whole-class targets rather than being tailored to the needs of individuals or groups. Consequently, some pupils do not have a clear view of what they are aiming for.

Generally, teaching assistants offer effective help for the pupils who require extra support and individual attention during lessons. This enables pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be included well. During a small number of lessons, however, teaching assistants, who were well deployed during group activities, became less involved during whole-class sessions. On these occasions the pupils who need additional support became less involved in their learning and their progress slowed. Teachers and pupils are enjoying the new approach to developing writing and there are early signs that this is raising standards; importantly, the newly appointed staff share the vision for this style of teaching.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching quality to provide all pupils with the right levels of support and challenge so that they can learn to the best of their ability - satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Inducting new members of staff has inevitably called heavily upon the time of senior leaders. This has been managed well through mentoring and support to help new teachers settle and become familiar with school practice. The consultant headteacher has encouraged reflection and debate on various leadership styles and is helping to develop the leadership skills of the headteacher and other senior leaders. Members of the senior leadership team have been given wider responsibilities and they make increasing contributions to school improvement. They are becoming more involved in making decisions and show a greater understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A whole-school approach to raising standards has been established. Morale is improving and, more significantly, staff appear happier in their work than in the past; they are showing a strong willingness to ensure that good practice is shared and actions are taken to raise pupils' achievement. The monitoring of teaching is much more focused on learning and is linked proportionately to ongoing support for new teachers in particular. This is helping to ensure that the identified

areas for improvement are addressed more effectively. The school has a generally accurate view of the quality of teaching. The processes of monitoring and evaluation are more rigorous and precise. Reports produced by senior leaders are evaluative and helpful in raising standards and achievement. All senior leaders have contributed in some way to supporting the development of the Foundation Stage. The deputy headteacher continues to develop her skills at a rapid pace and has brought even greater rigour to the tracking of pupils' progress. The assessment data are being used effectively to set very challenging targets and these are successfully raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress. The school is not, however, using the monitoring and assessment information to evaluate its overall effectiveness.

With the fresh eyes provided by the experienced additional governors, the governing body is becoming increasingly involved in challenging the school to bring about improvement. The governors have a better understanding of their role and how they can make a difference to the school. They are mindful that the recruitment and retention of staff continue to be issues for the leadership in order to build capacity. As senior leaders become more confident, they are questioning the school's capacity for sustainable improvement and wish to improve things themselves rather than rely on external support. As yet, however, a clear strategic plan has not been drafted to inform decisions about the long-term future of the school.

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

- Widen management so that more staff take greater leadership and management responsibilities and allow senior management time to be used more effectively - good.

External support

Education Leeds has responded positively following the last monitoring inspection and continues to support the school. The support has been particularly beneficial during the time of considerable additional pressures caused by the large turnover of staff and the opening of the Children's Centre. The appointment of a consultant headteacher is timely and has provided fresh impetus and direction to the school. Her good quality consultancy and advice have supported the headteacher, senior leaders and teachers well. The impact of this can be seen in the improved leadership skills and confidence of staff as a whole.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the recently extended leadership focuses on a long-term direction for the school and builds capacity to sustain improvement in pupils' achievement.
- Make use of the information gained from monitoring to evaluate the school's overall effectiveness.