

16 October 2007

Mr G Leach
Headteacher
Horton Grange Primary School
Spencer Road
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD7 2EU

Dear Mr Leach

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HORTON GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Additional Inspectors, Christine Harrison, Kath Halifax and Elizabeth Godman to your school on 15 and 16 October 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 November 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

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, the Strategic Director – Services to Children and Young People and the Managing Director of Education Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Angela M Headon
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF HORTON GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 15–16 October 2007

Evidence

During the visit, inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's evaluation of progress, and examined samples of pupils' work. Twenty-one lessons were observed. Inspectors met the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of governors, representatives from Education Bradford and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in May, significant changes have taken place in the senior leadership team, as two deputy headteachers and an assistant headteacher have left the school. A deputy headteacher has recently been appointed and two acting assistant headteachers are presently in place. A Year 6 group leader, with responsibility for numeracy, and a special needs coordinator have been appointed with effect from January 2008.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain exceptionally low and pupils' achievement is inadequate, as they were at the inspection in November 2006 and the previous monitoring visit. Nevertheless, the unvalidated test results for 2007, together with the school's own assessment records, indicate that there has been satisfactory improvement in pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science. In particular, pupils who speak English as an additional language, whether at an early stage or as more advanced learners of the language, have benefited from improved support. They are no longer disadvantaged and make progress that matches that of other pupils.

Children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall. When children start in the Nursery their skills are well below average. Staff are relentless, careful and thorough in identifying and providing for children's needs, enabling them to make good progress. Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception classes. Although achievement improved in 2007, pupils still joined Key Stage 1 with skills below those expected for their age. Reception staff are now planning work based on accurate assessments and information transferred from the Nursery, enabling them to provide well matched and suitable activities to secure the progress of all children.

At Key Stage 1 the overall improvement in standards is only slight and the school has not succeeded in reaching the standards attained in 2004 and 2005. There are clear improvements in teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 but these have not yet had time to have a full impact on pupils' standards and achievement in Year 2. In Key Stage 2, however, the improvement in achievement

between 2006 and 2007 is better, with more pupils gaining higher levels, particularly in mathematics and science.

The weakness in this general picture of improving achievement lies in the inconsistency in progress and achievement across different groups of pupils. Progress is faster in Nursery than it is in Reception. Girls' achievement has improved more than that of boys. Similarly, the improved achievement for middle and higher attaining pupils has not been matched by corresponding improvements for lower attainers. The school's records show too much variation in progress between different teaching groups, including inadequate progress in some lower sets. Despite the recent rise in the number of pupils reaching the higher levels in tests, lesson observations show that higher attainers could often make more progress than they do. Although most pupils currently make satisfactory progress in lessons and in their written work, this rate of progress is not yet sufficient to make up for ground that was lost in earlier days when pupils' learning was inadequate.

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

- Raise the achievement of all pupils in English, mathematics and science
 - satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour around school and in lessons is good. In discussion, pupils said that at break times, bullying or boisterous behaviour now occurs only occasionally. Pupils are keen to make a positive contribution and offer constructive ideas as to how school could be better, including suggestions for lunchtime clubs to improve the school environment. Pupils are very clear about classroom rules and targets for behaviour and respond well to the routines and procedures consistently established in classrooms. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are eager to show what they can do. Some, particularly boys, do lose concentration and become restless when an activity lacks interest and is prolonged. Pupils now have a clear and secure understanding of their learning targets. Attendance continues to be satisfactory and its importance continues to be promoted.

Quality of provision

Since the previous monitoring visit, the school has continued to work to improve the quality of teaching and learning overall. Regular monitoring by the senior leadership team, supported by the school improvement partner, has enabled the school to reduce weaker aspects of teaching and improve practice. Focused support with a teacher previously judged inadequate, for example, resulted in inspectors observing a good lesson with outstanding features. Nevertheless, the current picture is one of

inconsistency between classes and age groups, with pupils not able to maintain their progress throughout their time at the school. Less than half of the lessons observed

by inspectors were good and a small amount of teaching was inadequate. The school is aware that the proportion of good or better teaching is not yet high enough to improve standards for pupils after a period of sustained underachievement.

Lesson planning is consistent across the school and is regularly scrutinised by senior leaders. It identifies learning objectives, tasks and activities which pupils are expected to complete. However, in practice, planning for group work, in particular, does not always focus on the knowledge and skills pupils need to improve their understanding and achieve well. Equally, in some lessons, activities are not always well matched to pupils' ability levels.

In the best lessons, assessment was well used to ensure the right level of challenge was provided for all pupils and that targets were appropriate. Pupils understood the learning objective, which was kept in focus throughout the lesson. Teachers set a brisk pace and high expectations and pupils were eager to do well. The use of real objects in a number of lessons also promoted good understanding, as did those lessons where teachers, aware of the underachievement of boys, for example, endeavoured to choose activities to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of all pupils.

However, there is still too much teaching which fails to engage and sustain pupils' interest and enjoyment of learning. Key factors in these lessons were slow pace with extended teacher input and insufficient challenge leading to pupils becoming frustrated and losing concentration.

Pupils who have English as an additional language or are new to English are now receiving a programme of improved support through the language support team and there is a range of provision for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Throughout the school, however, there is variability in the way teaching assistants support pupils. In the majority of lessons, they are used very successfully for both small group and individual work, but in some lessons their role is more limited and they have less impact on pupils' progress.

Overall, marking is effective and is particularly informative in core subjects. Curricular targets are shared with pupils and they understand what they need to do to improve. Considerable attention has been given to improving assessment and tracking pupils' progress, with the majority of staff conscientiously maintaining accurate records. These have been effectively used to identify underachievement in both vulnerable and targeted groups and have led to focused intervention and support for these pupils.

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

- Improve teaching and learning to a good standard to help pupils to quickly catch up on lost ground – inadequate
- Ensure that pupils have a clear knowledge and understanding of their learning targets, and that the school tracks their progress towards reaching them robustly – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to embrace the support provided by Education Bradford, particularly that which is appropriately focused on building the capacity of senior and middle leaders. Recent development of the senior leadership group has strengthened the school's ability to deliver the required improvements. All members understand their roles and responsibilities and there is a clear collective determination to tackle underperformance. The present consistency and relative stability of leadership are also helping to raise staff morale. Key strategic tasks are also being shared; for example all senior leaders are fully involved in monitoring teaching and learning. Year group leaders are also taking greater responsibility and are more actively involved in securing improvements in achievement and standards through, for example, the analysis and use of assessment data. The role of subject leaders, however, remains underdeveloped and the quality of their work is too variable.

Overall, the school's judgement of its work is accurate and reflects an understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Regular reviews ensure that senior leaders are able to effectively monitor progress on each of the school's key priorities. This is consolidated through meetings with teaching staff to review pupils' progress. However, despite intensive support, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not securing consistent quality across the school. The proportion of good or better teaching is not high enough to have a significant impact on achievement and standards.

Planning for school improvement is clear and is contributing to effective self-evaluation, with a greater role for senior leaders. However, little significant progress was made initially because of the time taken to secure improvements and stability in staffing. The school has yet to recognise the urgency that is consequently required to address the areas for improvement. The overall rate of progress since the inspection in 2006 is too slow. Nonetheless, governors are fully aware of what is necessary to improve outcomes for pupils and they are continuing to challenge the school. They welcome the good support from Education Bradford, with regular progress reports and relevant training.

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

Improve leadership and management, including governance, so that the school provides an acceptable standard of education – satisfactory

Work to ensure that the quality of pupils' education is not disrupted – satisfactory

External support

The school continues to receive good support and challenge from Education Bradford. The timescale for the school's removal from special measures has been revised. The school improvement partner continues to closely monitor the school's rate of progress, with accurate and regular reviews. As a result, the school has made progress in a number of key areas, and there is extensive support to improve teaching and learning. The school is working productively with a linked 'outstanding' school and all leaders have benefited from the focused guidance that has been provided.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure all teaching is consistently good or better, with a clear focus on challenge and expectation.
- Improve, as a matter of urgency, the rate of progress in addressing the key issues identified at the last inspection.