

17 March 2008

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 Liz Godman and Jim Kidd, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 11 and 12 March 2008, 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 October 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed in consultation with the lead inspector.

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 fourth monitoring inspection: 11 and 12 March 2008

Evidence

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

Context

At the end of the autumn term the Year 6 teacher left the school. An advanced skills teacher on secondment from another school currently teaches the Year 6 class. A teacher continues to be absent due to ill-health. The teacher of the Year 5 and 6 class now has a permanent contract. The temporary Year 3 and 4 class-teacher has resigned with effect from the end of the spring term. Arrangements are in hand to recruit a temporary teacher for the summer term. At the start of this term the consultant headteacher's time in school was reduced from three days per week to one day. She now spends very little time in the school.

Achievement and standards

The progress of pupils across the school is more consistent due to further improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. Current assessment data indicate that since the last monitoring inspection more pupils are progressing at a rate above that expected nationally and standards are rising throughout the school. Pupils' work shows better quality, quantity and presentation. In all cohorts, the percentage of pupils achieving the nationally expected levels, or above, for their age has increased in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in mathematics presents a much more positive picture this term in all year groups as a result of the measures put into place.

Boys' achievement continues to improve and in some instances boys and girls are progressing at the same pace. Boys are now much more motivated and engaged in their learning than they were in the past. This is reflected in the assessment information which shows that the attainment gap is closing, particularly in mathematics. Standards of the current Year 6 are continuing to improve with noticeable gains in reading and writing in particular. Progress in science is slower but booster groups are already in place to tackle this.

Children in the Foundation Stage are continuing to make good progress particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Teachers use assessment information very effectively to promote higher attainment and support children's individual learning needs. In Nursery, there is excellent involvement of parents in recording their children's development at home and in planning the next steps of 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 – good.

Personal development and well-being

Improvements in pupils' attendance have been sustained since the last monitoring inspection. Attendance groups for targeted pupils have proved unnecessary because the attendance of these pupils has improved so much. Sharper analysis of the reasons for absence has ensured appropriate action is taken to meet the needs and circumstances of particular families. More interesting lessons and rewards for 100% attendance have also increased pupils' enthusiasm to attend school regularly. A free breakfast, followed by a booster class, has also improved the punctuality of some pupils who were persistently late.

Pupils' self-esteem continues to improve: they are eager to participate fully and confidently in lessons, showing increased care in their work and presentation. Pupils are consistently friendly and very positive about their school, saying, 'Lessons are more fun and there is more choice.' and 'It's really good to be a pupil here.' They also report that incidents of bullying have reduced and that there is always someone to go to if bullying does happen.

Behaviour continues to improve and unacceptable behaviour is now rare, because of the clear and shared understanding about what is expected. More interesting lessons and rewards for good behaviour have improved the involvement and response of almost all pupils. In lessons only a small number of pupils now display some difficult behaviour. This is due to careful monitoring and support for those with behavioural difficulties and the effective use of a variety of activities, such as the social and emotional aspects of learning programme, to improve social skills and behaviour. Short exclusions are now used very sparingly and effectively as a response to only very serious incidents. This targeted approach has brought a marked improvement in the offenders' behaviour.

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

In the Foundation Stage, improvements noted at the last monitoring inspection have continued. A stimulating environment and interesting activities both indoors and outside have been developed. This is accelerating children's progress from a very low starting point on entry in all the areas of learning. The strong and improving relationships are securing particularly good progress in personal, social and emotional development, so that children are becoming more confident and keen to learn. Increasingly accurate observations and assessments are used well to plan the next steps in learning for each child.

At Key Stages 1 and 2, the consistency and quality of teaching has improved and this is securing greater progress in pupils' learning. At the start of lessons pupils are now very clear about what they are supposed to be learning and what the teacher is looking for in their work. Activities are carefully planned to match the needs of different groups and this is providing a greater degree of challenge for most pupils. Teaching assistants are increasingly effective when working with small groups, drawing pupils' attention to what is required and enabling and praising their success and progress. They are more involved in making accurate assessments of the progress made by pupils in their groups and sharing this with the teacher to plan the next steps in learning. Very occasionally teaching assistants continue to be less involved in whole-class lessons with the result that opportunities to accelerate the progress of some pupils are missed. Routines for independent work are not yet securely established. On occasion, when an adult is not working closely with a group, some pupils become distracted and make frequent mistakes. This slows their progress. Continuing improvements in teachers' questioning ensure that pupils think about their answers and are able to explain or justify them. In a few instances a lack of challenge persists for a few higher attaining pupils. Pupils appreciate the increased occasions when they can talk to a partner about their work. They enjoy the growing opportunities to check their own or others' work against what is required. The quality of marking is much better and gives clear advice to pupils about how to improve. Pupils are responding positively to this, improving both the content and presentation of their work. Livelier presentation, including good use of the interactive whiteboard, more interesting activities and higher expectations from teachers have increased pupils' enjoyment and involvement in lessons. Many teachers are now using time well, especially at the start of lessons, so that pupils are immediately interested and engaged in activities that ensure their learning moves on at a brisk pace.

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 – good.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher continue to take a strong lead to improve the school. The impact of their work shows in the improving rate of progress in tackling the areas for improvement. The 'Vision Day', which involved all stakeholders, has brought a greater clarity and sense of direction to the work of the school. Members of the senior leadership team are enthusiastically playing a greater role in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Staff work well alongside each other, sharing expertise. This effective teamwork amongst staff is supporting improvements in many aspects of the school. Morale is positive because staff can see the improvements clearly. There is a firm belief that all the hard work and effort is worthwhile because it is resulting in pupils making much better progress. An encouraging aspect of the school's improvement is that staff are being asked regularly by Education Leeds to share their expertise to help improve practice in other schools.

The monitoring of teaching is accurate and sharply focused on learning. Effective action, including sharing best practice, has further improved the quality and consistency of teaching. The procedures for tracking pupils' attainment and progress, to enable the setting of challenging targets and for identifying those in need of additional support are robust and firmly established. Documentation has become leaner, more evaluative and helpful. The school has begun the process of review to update its self-evaluation form and this shows that the leaders are gaining a better understanding of the school's main strengths and weaknesses. Governors too are strengthening their role and involvement in school improvement. Training and increased information about pupils' progress, provided by senior leaders, are helping governors to be better and more accurately informed so that they can question and challenge more readily.

The Foundation Stage continues to be well led. The staff and headteacher articulate a clear vision and direction for the Foundation Stage through a good understanding of how young children learn. The school's leadership has strengthened and is taking greater responsibility for its own developments. This reflects the school's increased capacity to bring about and maintain improvements although clear plans are not yet in place to firmly secure this. For example, the school does not yet have a plan for the recruitment and retention of staff.

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 continued to provide effective support to the school to maintain the increasing pace of improvement. The decision to reduce the support of the consultant headteacher to one day a week has enabled the leadership team to take increasing control and drive forward their ideas with greater levels of independence.

Priorities for further improvement

- Draw up an action plan for securing the recruitment and retention of staff to ensure high quality.