

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



20 December 2007

Mr C Brislen
Grange Primary School
Normacot Grange Road
Meir
Stoke-on-Trent
ST3 7AW

Dear Mr Brislen

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Andrew Cook HMI, Clifford Blakemore and David Mankelow, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 11 and 12 December 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Director of Children's and Young People's Services for Stoke-on-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF GRANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 11 and 12 December 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, nominated staff, representatives from the governing body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection a seconded headteacher led the school until the end of June 2007. From September an associate headteacher has led the school through the autumn term. Three teachers have left the school and two newly qualified teachers have been appointed. One teacher is currently on long term absence as a result of ill health.

Achievement and standards

Teacher assessments indicate that by the end of the Reception year children generally have the skills and knowledge expected for their age. However, this is not the case for reading and number calculations where their skills are below what is expected. In lessons observed the Reception children made good progress.

Standards at the end of Year 2 in 2007 were exceptionally low in reading and mathematics. They were below average in writing. Tests taken by Year 6 children at the same time showed that this group of pupils attained exceptionally low standards in science and below average standards in English and mathematics. Considering children's starting points in Year 1 progress was inadequate.

Since September the school has improved how it tracks standards and achievement in English and mathematics. Information collected is reasonably accurate. However, the school recognises that further moderation is needed to ensure all assessments of standards are accurate. Overall, the picture is one of improvement and a significant number of children have made the expected progress since September. This is not the case for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's own tracking shows that they are making inadequate progress.

The school's focus on English and mathematics has meant there has been little work done to improve standards in science. The school has not tracked progress in science, but there are satisfactory plans to do so next term. Pupils' work seen in their books shows standards are below average and progress is inadequate.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2007:

- raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils enjoy school and behave well. Instances of misbehaviour are well managed. Pupils are supportive of each other, particularly when asked to comment on the work of a classmate. Their comments are generally accurate, linked to the agreed targets for the piece of work, and helpful. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work even when it lacks challenge and interest. Despite the school's rigorous efforts to improve attendance, including support from the education welfare service, attendance remains below average. This is caused mostly by a small number of families who take holidays during term time and a very small minority of pupils who are persistently absent.

Quality of provision

Action taken since the previous inspection to improve teaching is leading to better learning in most classes. In the best lessons seen the pace of learning was brisk because teaching encouraged everyone to participate and the activities interested the pupils. This is particularly evident in English. Teachers have benefited from support from lead practitioners. They have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve and have improved how they assess work. They set targets for improvement and most pupils are aware of how these can help their progress. The quality of work in English and mathematics books is higher than at the time of the previous inspection because of higher teacher expectations and helpful marking. There are increasing examples of marking that gives encouragement and informs pupils better about how they can improve their work. However, this emerging improved practice is not consistent in all classes or subjects.

Lesson planning has improved. In the majority of classes, activities have clearer learning intentions which are better matched to pupils' needs. Nevertheless, there is still evidence of weak planning which does not clearly outline expectations for the different abilities within a class. Teaching is not always pitched accurately and there remain lessons where pupils requiring additional help are not supported well enough to succeed. Similarly, in a minority of lessons, higher ability pupils work at tasks that do not provide sufficient challenge. In these lessons the pace of learning is still too slow.

In the majority of lessons observed teaching assistants were used effectively to support learning. However, in a small minority of lessons teachers placed too much reliance on this additional support and did not monitor closely enough the progress pupils receiving additional support were making.

Good teaching was observed in classes where there were Reception aged children. As a result, these children made good progress in their personal development and in building their language and literacy skills.

Tracking systems have improved. Teachers are now responsible for entering assessment data into the system themselves for pupils in their classes. This is beginning to raise their awareness of pupils' progress or lack of it. In English, where this tracking is used well, pupils have a better understanding of their writing levels and how they can become better writers. In a small minority of classes, teachers use assessment information effectively to identify precisely the next step in learning for each ability group. However, the needs of pupils who require additional support are not always planned for in sufficient detail to ensure that teaching accelerates their progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2007:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, increasing the pace of learning and ensuring planning clearly identifies the learning expected – satisfactory
- develop assessment systems that provide teachers with accurate information about pupils' standards and progress to support the planning of learning – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The associate headteacher has shown great determination to improve provision and raise standards. He has identified and confronted weaknesses in teaching and this has been crucial in improving provision since the previous inspection. The actions taken to strengthen the leadership at all levels have faced a number of challenges, including a subject leader absent due to illness. Despite these challenges, and areas where leadership still needs to be more effective, it is evident that the sense of direction that has been established has led to satisfactory progress in leadership at all levels. Training and links with teachers in effective schools has raised the awareness of subject leaders of their responsibilities for raising standards. However, they have had limited opportunities to monitor or evaluate learning in their subjects. The English subject leader has monitored handwriting and established a portfolio of pupils' writing to support moderation. As a result, the school will in future be able to measure progress against accurate benchmarks. The subject leader for mathematics, who is also the subject leader for science, has also been responsible for leading improvements in mathematics since October. She has had no opportunities to formally observe teaching in either subject. She has monitored the progress pupils are making in mathematics and reviewed planning to improve challenge for all the ability groups. At this stage, the lack of opportunity for subject leaders has meant leadership has had limited impact on raising standards. The assistant headteacher has improved the systems for assessing children during the Foundation Stage and has led training of teaching assistants on supporting pupils who require additional help. She has not formally monitored the quality of provision for pupils who require extra support to identify clearly why they continue to make inadequate progress. More successful has been the implementation of a performance management cycle. This sets clear targets for teachers, linked to the improvement points raised in the previous inspection report, and holds staff accountable for their pupils' progress.

The school's improvement plan is not sharp enough. The targets identified are too broad to enable the school or local authority to evaluate precisely the progress the school is making towards improving on the points raised in the previous inspection. Similarly, the progress reports produced by the associate headteacher and local authority are not sufficiently focused on the impact of the actions taken to secure improvement.

The governing body has been strengthened by the appointment of two new governors. Governors now have a clearer understanding of their roles in monitoring the school and holding it to account for its performance. The information they now receive from the school is improved. However, it is still not sufficiently focused on progress against the improvement points identified in the previous report.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2007:

- strengthen leadership and management by involving leadership at all levels in rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures and making staff more accountable for their pupils' progress – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority statement of action has been amended to include monitoring and evaluation milestones and is adequate. It identifies support for each area of improvement to be implemented over the current academic year. However, the reports produced on progress to date do not evaluate sharply current progress on each of the improvement points. For example, the first local authority review is focused almost entirely on teaching and learning.

The appointment of an associate headteacher has been a very positive move and the support from consultants has contributed well to the satisfactory improvement in teaching.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that subject leaders have sufficient opportunities to fulfil their responsibilities and secure the improvement of standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve planning so that it clearly identifies how teaching meets the needs of the highest and lower attainers.