

30 March 2009

Mrs Ruth Hudson
Headteacher
The Alton School
Danebury Avenue
Roehampton
London
SW15 4PD

Dear Mrs Hudson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 March 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would particularly like to thank those pupils who spent time talking to me. Their views were welcomed and valued.

As a result of the inspection on 12 and 13 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and enhance personal development by improving pupils' speaking and independent and collaborative working skills
- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good
- improve attendance.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were low between 2005 and 2007. Standards improved in 2008 as a consequence of school actions, particularly the introduction of systems to track pupils' progress which allow the school quickly to identify any pupils requiring additional support. Pupils attained better standards in the national tests in English, mathematics and science. Given their starting points, this showed improved progress for the majority of pupils. However, too few pupils gained the higher levels in writing, a situation also seen in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. In samples of work seen during the inspection, standards varied between year groups. In the current Year 6, they are not as strong as for the 2008 cohort, but are better than at the last inspection. Given pupils' well below average starting points in Nursery, there is evidence of stronger achievement levels as a consequence of more consistently good teaching. The majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress.

with increasing numbers making better progress. Good progress is noticeable in some intervention classes such as the 'Linking Sounds and Letters' groups. Writing standards have improved and reflect the introduction of some good strategies that encourage speaking and listening. 'Talk partners', for example, are used consistently in lessons to provide opportunities for discussion. Pupils are becoming more independent, with the good 'Recipe for Success' strategy enabling them to identify what constitutes a successful piece of work, and to evaluate their own progress in relation to these agreed criteria. The school recognises that pupils still do not have enough opportunities to write imaginatively and at length, as a result of which they are not always sufficiently challenged, particularly the higher attainers. Training for the literacy coordinator in delivering extended writing is shortly to take place.

The monitoring of teaching by senior managers and some subject leaders shows an increase in the proportion of good lessons. However, teaching and learning remain satisfactory overall. This is because there are inconsistencies between classes which the school is continuing to address. Strengths in lessons include the quality of relationships which results in pupils wanting to do well. Some good targeted questioning by teachers helps ensure pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants are active during lessons and give good support to pupils. Teachers are increasingly using the better assessment data available to plan work for pupils of different abilities. However, this does not always ensure that different outcomes of learning, rather than different tasks for pupils, are identified. The quality of teachers' planning varies. For example, opportunities are missed to identify where the lesson may support aspects of literacy and numeracy and consequently to reinforce them with pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give good supportive comments, but not all of them give guidance on the next steps in pupils' learning. The use of learning targets is not fully established, although pupils do know their expected levels.

The current raw attendance data indicate a small dip in attendance compared to the inspection year. The data do not show the impact of a recent bout of infectious illness in the school or the recent work carried out by the school and the education welfare officer. First-day calling has been re-established and more parents phone in with explanations for their children's absence. The breakfast club has been well used to encourage the attendance of persistent latecomers. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about their 'mufti day', the reward for 10 consecutive days of whole-class attendance. While certificates are presented for good attendance, the school does not make these awards regularly enough to motivate pupils consistently. There are good systems in place to monitor attendance, and court action has taken place in the more extreme cases. There are still too many persistent absentees, although data show that this now involves fewer families.

The school is well poised to improve. Senior leaders know the schools' strengths and areas for development well. The local authority and the School Improvement Partner provide good support, for example, in contributing to the review of teaching, and in moderating the school's own judgements. Good school-development planning is in

place, with the identification of measurable criteria against which the impact of the school's work can be measured.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pye
Additional Inspector