



01 December 2006

Mr Alan Clark-Wilson
The Headteacher
Newchurch Primary School
Newchurch
Sandown
PO36 ONL

Dear Mr Clark-Wilson

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NEWCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Dr Alison Thomson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 November 2006, 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 February 2006.

This letter 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.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and held discussions with the headteacher, middle managers, governors and parents. Discussions were also held with pupils as well as the attached inspector for the local authority (LA). Inspectors observed 10 part lessons.

Context

At the time of the last inspection an acting headteacher was in post. A new interim headteacher has been appointed initially on a temporary basis until the end of July 2007. There have been significant changes in staffing since the last inspection in June 2006. Two long-standing members of staff have left the school, an experienced teacher has taken up post as KS2 leader and

another as a Year 4 teacher. The acting assistant headteacher at the time of this visit is on maternity leave.

Achievement and standards

Progress through the school has improved in all areas and the dip in standards has been reversed. Achievement is now satisfactory and standards are broadly in line with those attained nationally. There has been a whole school focus on teaching and learning and this has been instrumental in raising achievement. The school has introduced effective methods for setting targets and tracking the progress of pupils. The implementation of this is still in its infancy and is not yet used consistently. However, assessment is more rigorous and more focused on what pupils need to do to improve.

Previous underperformance of the higher attaining pupils in Year 2 in reading, mathematics and science is being tackled. There is an improvement in the achievement of these pupils. This is as a result of more effective learning through work being matched better to their needs. Standards in writing are now high and, when compared with similar schools, the progress made is judged to be good for the vast majority of pupils at all levels of ability. Performance in subjects other than writing does not yet compare well enough with similar schools, but the gap is narrowing rapidly.

In all lessons observed, standards were at least average and the progress pupils made was satisfactory or better. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities also make satisfactory progress or better as a result of the effective use of teaching assistants. Strategies for tackling boy/girl differences in attainment have been implemented and there is evidence that these are already having an impact.

In Reception, the standards pupils' reach are at least in line with those achieved nationally, with the majority of pupils working beyond the early learning goals.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school as evidenced by a recent parental questionnaire and the interview inspectors held with pupils. They are mature beyond their years and discussed the progress of their school articulately. According to the pupils, 'The school has improved a lot because Mr. Clark-Wilson always helps us. He keeps us in order but we really like him.' Pupils say that homework now comes in 'bucketfuls' but they really enjoy doing it! Most pupils claimed that work given to them in class was more challenging, but some complained that targets set for them were 'no good' because they could already do what had been targeted. Pupils are now given more time to work together in pairs and groups and in teams, basic skills are improving and this impacts well on their

future economic well-being. The school is continuing to work on challenging the needs of the higher attainers and is aware of the need to do so, particularly in mathematics. Insufficient time is still being given for pupils to work on open ended problem-solving and the development of thinking skills.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved tremendously since the previous monitoring visit and is now good. Teachers understand the features that make a good lesson and are being encouraged to try out new strategies. Teaching is more focused on what the pupils should be learning. The objectives of each lesson are shared with the pupils so they know what is expected of them. Teachers use assessment information to plan lessons with tasks that meet the needs of the pupils. Lessons have good pace, activities are varied and these often involve the pupils in their own learning. Good progress has been made in the way teachers use carefully thought out questions to make the pupils think more and give them opportunities to participate in discussions and group work. There is effective use of teaching assistants and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory or better progress in lessons. Most of the more able pupils are given tasks that challenge them, although this could be extended even further. In the most successful lessons, teachers assess each pupil's progress throughout the lesson, as well as checking how well they have understood the learning objectives by the end of the lesson. This is not yet consistent. Peer assessment is used well, but this could be extended to help pupils themselves evaluate areas for improvement.

There is a rigorous cycle of lesson monitoring by the headteacher. The impact of this is reviewed and evaluated well indicating that good progress has been made in this area. Inadequacies in teaching have been identified and effective steps have been taken to tackle these. Good practice has also been identified and opportunities have been given to share this amongst all members of staff. Teachers have established the current levels at which most pupils are working and have set them appropriate targets, with the exception of some of the higher attainers whose targets do not challenge them sufficiently. Teachers are monitoring how well pupils are meeting their targets and what they need to do to improve. This information is being shared with the pupils to involve them in the evaluation of their own learning. Although this is in its early stages there is evidence that this is having a positive impact on the achievement of the pupils. This was identified as a weakness at the last monitoring visit and satisfactory progress has been made.

Homework is now set rigorously and is more varied in content and style. Pupils enjoy homework and parents comment very favourably on having more information on the day to day progress of their children.

The curriculum has improved and is now good. Writing has been identified for different purposes and is delivered in other subjects across the curriculum, for example to record observations in science. The computer system has been networked and pupils are being given ample opportunity to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. A very successful lesson was seen in Year 1 that involved all the pupils using the interactive whiteboard. Plans to refurbish the outdoor area for reception pupils are now well developed and this work is imminent.

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

- Improve the teachers' use of assessment information to ensure all pupils are suitably challenged, particularly the more able pupils in writing and mathematics – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The school's priorities for action are now extremely clear and coherent because it now makes comprehensible and unambiguous links between the areas requiring development. Perceptive and highly effective leadership by the new headteacher has successfully improved the quality of teaching and learning which has already had an impact on standards and achievement. He has implemented a rigorous timetable of lesson observation tightly linked with performance management. Teachers receive detailed feedback on their work and are set clear targets for improvement which are regularly reviewed. As a result of this, the quality of teaching has rapidly improved and is now good overall. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised and higher attaining pupils are now beginning to be challenged in lessons more consistently. However, there remain inconsistencies of approach which results in some higher attainers making only satisfactory progress rather than good. For example, in some classes, pupils have been set targets which they have already achieved.

Self-evaluation at senior level is becoming far more effective. This expertise is planned to be developed amongst subject leaders in the near future. They are now beginning to jointly observe lessons in their own subject areas in readiness for their own monitoring role. A new system to track pupils' progress is now in use but it is too early to gauge the full impact of these new arrangements. However, careful enough consideration is not being given to the actual ability of higher attaining pupils and how many levels of progress they might make in a year.

Governors have carefully considered their responsibility for the weaknesses identified in the last monitoring visit. They have increased their involvement and now show signs of understanding how to hold the school to account for its performance. Training sessions have taken place to improve governors' understanding of their responsibilities. Further training is planned to build

upon this by increasing their ability to focus on the most important issues for the school. They are beginning to ask appropriate questions and to seek evidence to verify what the school tells them. The governors are benefiting from effective guidance and support from the LA who have arranged the appointment of two additional governors.

There has been a thorough recent evaluation of parents' views. The vast majority of parents now say, 'What a wonderful school this is now.', 'What a turn around! The children are so much happier and can't wait to get to school each day.' There is overwhelming support for the headteacher who has 'put the heart back into the school.' Communication and relationships with parents are now excellent. Links with parents will not be inspected during the next visit.

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

- Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management through providing appropriate professional development opportunities - good progress.
- Develop rigorous self-evaluation procedures that will enable the school to identify and implement appropriate targets for improvement - good progress.
- Improve links with parents – outstanding progress.

External support

The local authority is providing the school with good support. Since the previous monitoring visit the LA has appointed two new members to the governing body and this has strengthened it considerably. They have also provided staff training in the guise of a 'Leadership Development Programme' which has benefited middle managers particularly. Support has also been given to all teachers by the Primary Strategy team. The consultant headteacher still spends one day a week supporting the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Senior Education Officer for the Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat
Additional Inspector