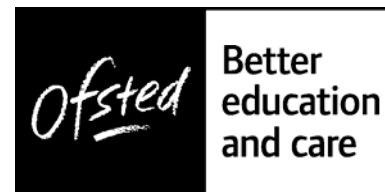


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Mr R Workman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Workman

Implementation of Beaconside Primary and Nursery School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Brian Cartwright HMI and Linda McGill HMI to your school on 5 and 6 May 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the quality of the action plan; the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school's action plan is satisfactory.

The LEA's statement of action is satisfactory, although the target date for removal of special measures is optimistic.

The school has made reasonable progress since being subject to special measures.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers until further notice.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Educational Services for Worcestershire. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF BEACONSIDE NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 15 lessons or parts of lessons, two assemblies and one registration session were inspected. The pupils were observed at break and lunchtimes. Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior management team, two governors and a representative of the LEA. Samples of work were examined and a range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of governors and a representative of the LEA.

The school's action plan is satisfactory. It addresses the key issues systematically, with a good summary, and appropriately, staff, governors and the LEA have been involved in its production. Clear targets for standards, progress and the times when these should be met would further improve the plan. Too many people or groups are allocated to evaluating progress in some strands of the plan, and some success criteria relate to provision rather than the learning outcome for pupils. The financial cost section contains a significant spend on information and communication technology (£8,000) which is not clearly related to the key issues.

The LEA's statement of action is also satisfactory, and provides a secure basis of support which, if combined effectively with the school's actions, should lead to the removal of special measures within the required timescale. The LEA should consider greater support in resolving the compliance issues, progress against which will be evaluated at the next visit. The target date of May 2006 for removal of special measures comes before some of the school's actions are expected to have been completed.

Standards in lessons were generally in line with or higher than national expectations at Key Stage 1, and in line or slightly lower at Key Stage 2; standards were weakest in Year 5, and in science in Year 6 where standards are below national expectations. Progress was satisfactory in lessons where the teaching was at least satisfactory. This is similar to the findings of the section 10 report. Overall, this shows at least satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, but unsatisfactory progress at Key Stage 2, particularly in the upper years.

The quality of teaching was satisfactory in 13 of the lessons, which at 87 per cent is marginally better than at the previous inspection. There was no poor teaching, nor was the teaching very good or better in any of the lessons; overall, the teaching was satisfactory. The better teaching involved systematic use of the Primary National Strategies to engage all pupils in discussion. In the better lessons, the tasks were well matched to the pupils' needs, there was enough challenge to stimulate good activity and the involvement of all pupils, and classroom assistants contributed significantly to the progress of particular pupils. In weaker lessons, the

teaching lacked pace, the pupils were not involved in talking with the teacher, the degree of challenge was inappropriate and the pupils were not helped to build on their previous knowledge and skills. Where the teachers did not assess what the pupils were learning as the lesson progressed and did not use assessment data to inform their lesson planning, some pupils were prevented from reaching their potential.

Governors have recognised the issues raised by the inspection and have begun to address them satisfactorily with the help of focused training from the LEA. Recent restructuring and clarification of the role of governors, and a shared commitment to put things right suggests that the correct initial steps to improve accountability have been put in place.

The new headteacher has rapidly established new monitoring practices, resolved some issues relating to the timetable, worked well to include staff and governors in the development of the action plan, and has a clear picture of the school's strengths and weakness. His drive to improve assessment practice is an example of sound progress in resolving key issues. The long-serving deputy headteacher has also responded to new and challenging circumstances and is contributing effectively to building a strong sense of commitment within the staff to improve their practice. Subject leadership, however, remains variable. It is strongest in English and weakest in mathematics.

The LEA has begun a systematic programme of training for subject co-ordinators, which is being sensibly managed via the link adviser. The school is monitoring aspects of teaching and learning well, but needs to ensure this complements LEA and HMI monitoring inspections.

The pupils' attitudes and their behaviour remain very good and are a real strength of the school. In the best lessons, the pupils are keen and anxious to please, work hard, show delight in new learning, and are proud of their achievements. In weaker lessons, attention can wander, although no poor behaviour was observed. The teaching does not always capitalise sufficiently on the pupils' positive attitudes.

Assemblies were calm, well organised events where reflective moments were enjoyed by the school community and parents. They involved pupils very well, and set a good example in terms of moral and social education. Prayers were offered, and a consistent 'values' theme planned into corporate reflections.

The quality of the LEA's support is good, and is well managed through the link adviser. There is a clear programme linked to the school's action plan that will not overload staff. In future, the LEA should ensure that governors receive copies of LEA monitoring reports.

Key Issue 1: improve the achievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6 so that standards are raised

A reasonable start has been made to improving assessment, which forms a major thrust of the school's work towards improving achievement. The pupils' targets have been reviewed and are more challenging, taking into account attainment at the end of the previous year and more realistic expectations of the amount of progress over the year. The teachers' expectations of what the pupils should achieve have been challenged and have risen in response to input from the headteacher and LEA, but there is still some way to go before rigour and challenge in target-setting are firmly established. The school is reasonably confident that the Year 6 pupils will do better in the national tests and will improve on last year's results in English and mathematics.

Specific areas of weakness such as aspects of writing have been identified. Targets for the school, each class and individual pupils have been set in order to improve sentence construction, and a recent moderated evaluation of pieces of writing showed some improvement. It also revealed that standards in writing are significantly lower in the middle years of Key Stage 2. There is little further evidence of improvement in standards, but initiatives are at a relatively early stage of implementation.

The quality of the leadership of subjects and aspects of the school's work is variable, and this is having an impact on the effectiveness of the steps the school is taking on this key issue. Some co-ordinators are strong practitioners who are confident and knowledgeable and have a secure whole-school perspective. Others are less secure in their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and achievement in their subjects, and the steps that need to be taken to tackle pressing issues. Their role in monitoring is under-developed and their accountability for standards in their subjects is not firmly established.

Reasonable progress has been made.

Key Issue 2: address the variable quality of teaching to bring it up to the level of the best and improve assessment and its use

Training for staff to improve the quality of their teaching has been good and timely although as yet the impact is not fully evident in lessons and, for example, there is inconsistent application of the Primary National Strategy. The LEA is providing good resources and personnel in sufficient quantity apart from in science. The school has embarked on systematic work scrutiny; for example, in writing, and is rigorously monitoring the quality of teaching here. Additional teaching support has been provided in Year 6, although it was not clear how effectively the extra teacher support was being used for 'at risk' pupils, and what booster resources are being deployed. There are no evaluation criteria to help the school assess the effectiveness of such an expensive strategy. In the lessons observed, the extra resource was underused. Nevertheless, reasonable progress has been made.

Key Issue 3: improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels

A commentary on aspects of this action is included above. The organisational changes made to the governing body, and training for governors from the LEA have been good. Despite the school's commitment to resolving this issue without help, the LEA is wisely providing external advice and direction.

Reasonable progress has been made.

Statutory requirements

A collective act of worship was seen on both days of the visit. The school has scheduled a review of the quality of this provision. Reasonable progress towards implementing the Disability Discrimination Act is being made, with the ongoing support of the LEA. Both of these matters will be checked at the next monitoring visit.

Overall, progress has been reasonable.