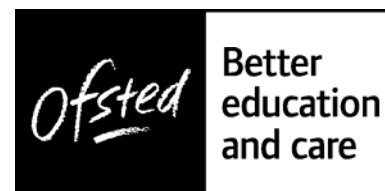


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22 June 2005

Mrs H Hollick  
Headteacher  
Redbourn Infants' and Nursery School  
Long Cutt  
Redbourn  
St Albans  
Hertfordshire AL3 7EX

Dear Mrs Hollick

### **Implementation of Redbourn Infants' and Nursery School's Action Plan**

Following the visit of Ms J Winstanley HMI and Mr C J Redman HMI, to your school on 15 and 16 June 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 good.

The LEA's statement of action is good.

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

The LEA's target date of summer term 2006 for the removal of special measures is realistic.

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 of Children, Schools and Families for Hertfordshire. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid  
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF REDBOURN INFANTS' AND NURSERY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN**

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

During the visit 16 lessons or parts of lessons, two registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of governors and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the LEA.

The school's action plan is clear and well structured. The four areas for improvement are subdivided into measurable outcome targets which provide greater clarity about what needs to be done to secure improvement. For each area of the plan a series of appropriate strategies and actions are identified. Objectives are clearly stated and the success criteria are measurable. Start and end dates of each action are clearly stated with helpful interim dates for reviewing progress. A useful timeline shows when each action will commence, be reviewed and evaluated. The plan also includes a detailed monthly overview showing what action is planned, the lead person and how and to whom they are accountable. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the success of the plan appropriately include the governors, the school and the LEA. A strength of the document is that it incorporates the actions planned by the LEA to support and monitor the planned improvements in the school. Resources and sources of funding are appropriately identified.

The LEA's commentary and statement of action is well organised. It includes a statement about the difficulties the school faced prior to the section 10 inspection and the action the LEA took to strengthen the management of the school during and subsequent to inspection. The LEA has appointed an additional governor and does not intend to suspend the school's right to have a delegated budget. The planned support is helpfully cross-referenced to the school's action plan and details how the LEA will monitor the school's progress.

Standards in the 2004 national tests were average in reading, writing and mathematics. Provisional results for 2005 show an improvement in pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics. Although overall performance in reading remains similar to that in 2004, the proportion of pupils gaining Level 3 in reading has increased significantly.

The standards of work in the lessons seen varied from unsatisfactory to good. In the Foundation Stage standards were below those expected. Pupils enter the school with at least average, and often above average, attainment in most areas of learning. However their achievement is not adequately developed in the

Foundation Stage due to the lack of challenge of some of the activities and insufficient understanding about how young children learn. The provision and environment in the nursery is unsatisfactory and does not help children to achieve well. In Key Stage 1 standards were in line with national expectations or above in all lessons. The pupils in Year 1 achieve well as a result of the good teaching they receive. In Key Stage 1 pupils develop competent speaking and listening skills. Achievement in reading and writing, although improved, remains average overall with too few pupils achieving at the higher levels. However in mathematics pupils are achieving well.

The quality of teaching and learning, including the progress made by the pupils, were satisfactory or better in 11 lessons including five where they were good. There were marked differences between the key stages. The teaching in the Foundation Stage was satisfactory in only two of the seven lessons and consequently learning was similarly unsatisfactory overall. In Key Stage 1 teaching and learning were satisfactory in all lessons and good in five. In Year 1 all of the teaching and learning were good.

Where the teaching was good, lessons were planned carefully with appropriate attention given to providing pupils with different activities depending on their previous attainment. The work was challenging, well-structured and the teacher's expectations were suitably high. Exposition was good, but too rarely were strategies, such as discussion pairs or the use of mini-whiteboards, used to involve all of the pupils in answering questions. Marking was good; it was completed regularly and usually included helpful advice to the pupils.

Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, the work was insufficiently challenging, learning objectives were not sufficiently well defined and the work was not adequately structured to ensure the pupils made the progress of which they were capable. Planning involved copious paperwork, but lacked cohesion. Exposition was lacklustre and expectations were too low.

The teaching assistants' contribution to the quality of the teaching was generally good. Where they were well managed by the class teacher, they used their time profitably; for example, making an assessment of the pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the whole class session in a Year 2 mathematics lesson. Their contribution to group work was good. Sometimes their time was not adequately managed in whole class sessions, but they used their initiative well to ensure they made a positive contribution; for example, by refocusing pupils' attention when it wandered.

The timetable is not sufficiently well organised to allow teachers to deliver the curriculum coherently. In addition, there is no overall curriculum map in place to ensure that there is continuity and progression in pupils' learning as they move through the year groups.

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour were good or better in almost all lessons. They were good in nine lessons and very good in six. In the Foundation Stage, in spite of the unsatisfactory teaching, the pupils behaved well and were eager to learn. In Key Stage 1 pupils behaved well in lessons and around the school. Pupils were attentive and keen to contribute their thoughts and ideas. They enjoyed school and participated enthusiastically in lessons. They related well to each other but were given too few opportunities to work together collaboratively on shared tasks. In the one lesson where behaviour was less satisfactory, the pupils spent too long sitting listening to the teacher and became restless and distracted.

The leadership and management of the school have improved. The acting headteacher has a clear vision for improvement and is very committed to raising standards and improving the quality of education provided for the pupils. In a short time, and only working part-time in the school, she has developed a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has quickly gained the confidence of the school community. Her appointment to the substantive post of headteacher from September 2005 is providing much needed stability and continuity for the pupils, staff and parents. Under the guidance of the acting headteacher, the role of the deputy headteacher will be appropriately developed to include monitoring responsibilities related to improving teaching and learning. The thorough self-evaluation provided to HMI indicates that the acting headteacher has a realistic view of how much progress has been made since the school went into special measures and her awareness of what needs to be done to effect change. The quality of leadership and management elsewhere in the school varies from good to unsatisfactory but is unsatisfactory overall. The chair and vice-chair of governors are aware of the challenges that the school face and both are strongly committed to its improvement.

The LEA has provided a sound level of support and advice to the school. LEA intervention has secured the services of the acting headteacher, focused on support to improve the provision in the Foundation Stage, provided advice on developing the action plan and monitored the quality of teaching and learning.

## **Action taken to address the areas for improvement**

### **1: take action to rectify the significant weaknesses in the leadership and management of the headteacher and develop the role of the deputy headteacher**

Leadership and management were unsatisfactory before February 2005. Improvements have only been made since Easter 2005 and this has restricted progress on this area for improvement. The governors and the LEA took decisive action by appointing the acting headteacher then agreeing to her appointment to the substantive post with effect from September 2005. As a result there are clear plans in place based on a realistic view of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. Progress is reasonable on this area of improvement.

## **2: raise standards of achievement generally and ensure that the needs of the gifted, talented and more capable pupils are met through a more creative approach to the curriculum**

Provisional results for 2005 show that standards have risen slightly in writing and mathematics. However the school is not yet fully meeting the needs of the gifted and talented and more capable pupils due to the lack of planned challenging activities for these pupils in lessons.

Progress is limited on this area of improvement.

## **3: improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly by raising expectations and making better use of the information the teachers gather on the pupils from the assessments they make**

Monitoring of teaching has started; the ensuing judgements are helping the school to improve its evaluation of the quality of its provision, focus on areas of weakness and understand that, currently, teaching varies too widely in quality. Although the school does not have a teaching and learning policy to underpin its work, the headteacher is leading staff meetings to decide the principles that will lead to shared practice and eventually a written policy. A common format for lesson planning has yet to be agreed. Some achievement data is used to inform planning, but the tracking system is not sufficiently robust to identify underachievement early, raise teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve, or identify the effectiveness of intervention strategies. Relevant training has been provided, but this has not had sufficient impact; teaching has not improved adequately particularly in the Foundation Stage.

Progress has been limited.

## **4: reconsider arrangements for settling children into school and rectify the unwelcome nursery environment**

Good plans are in place to improve the induction of new pupils to the nursery and reception classes. Home visits by two staff members will start later this term. The pupils will be invited to attend two sessions and eat lunch as well as attend the school's open days. Currently, the invitations are sent to parents and the new pupils are not included in this correspondence.

The nursery environment has improved, but the quality of display and the organisation of activities are unsatisfactory. The inadequate heating has led to parental complaints but remedial action has yet to be taken.

Progress has been reasonable.

## **5: address the shortcomings in information and communication technology (ICT) and in care and welfare in the Foundation Stage**

Improvements in the provision for ICT are well-led. New equipment has been ordered and is expected to arrive soon; this includes two interactive whiteboards intended to increase the range of teaching and learning styles available to the pupils and better integrate ICT into the curriculum. The stand-alone computers in each classroom were rarely used in lessons and, reportedly, are unreliable. However, laptop computers were used well in a Foundation Stage lesson where the pupils showed good control of the cursor for drawing and selected sensibly from a menu of facilities to draw and paint. Nevertheless, although there are sensible plans to improve the school's ICT resources, currently they are not adequate to easily integrate ICT across the curriculum. In the absence of a curriculum map to identify where ICT should be used in lessons, the school has started to use LEA guidelines, but these are not used consistently. The school is working on an action plan to improve the teaching and learning of ICT and training has been provided for the teachers.

Progress is reasonable.