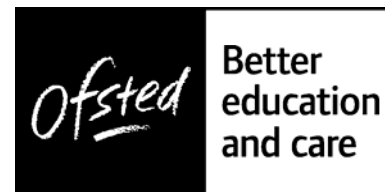


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Mr T Samain
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Samain

Implementation of The Hewett School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Mr A Knight HMI, Mrs K Salaria HMI, Mr P Brooker HMI, and Mr A Gray HMI to your school on 22 and 23 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 satisfactory overall with some weaknesses. The weaknesses outlined in the second paragraph of the note of the inspection findings should be addressed and amendments prepared by the second monitoring inspection.

The LEA's statement of action is good overall.

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

The LEA's target date of spring 2006 for the removal of special measures is ambitious.

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 Education for Norfolk. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HEWETT SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

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

During the visit 44 parts of lessons, four registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, senior members of staff and representatives from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils. The School Achievement Centre was visited. Samples of work were examined and a range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, three senior members of staff, the chair of the governing body and three representatives from the LEA.

The school's action plan provides a very clear outline of the appropriate actions to be taken. The milestones are particularly helpful as they will enable the school to monitor its rate of progress. The process of accountability effectively involves named governors, parents and the school council. The key proposals that provide a summary of the actions are generally very good. However, insufficient attention is given to the definition of positive learning attitudes in the classroom. The opportunity has been missed to include lesson observation data as evidence and as a target for the improvement of attitudes. The success criteria for punctuality does not aim for all lessons to start on time.

The attainment of the pupils in the Key Stage 3 national tests in 2004 in English showed a marked improvement from the previous year. However, this upward trend was not matched in mathematics and science where the average points scores were lower than the previous year. Girls gained better results than the boys, with the gap between them greatest in English.

The GCSE results for 2004 showed an improvement on the results achieved in the previous year. The average points score per pupil was broadly in line with the national averages for schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The percentages of pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C and one or more grades at A* to G were broadly in line with similar schools but significantly lower for pupils achieving 5 or more grades A* to G. However, the value added from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 was in the lowest quartile of all schools nationally.

The average point score for pupils in the GCE AS, A level and VCE examinations in 2004 were broadly in line with the national average for all maintained schools.

The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 33 lessons, including 19 in which it was good and three in which it was very good; teaching was unsatisfactory nine lessons and poor in two. There is a core of teaching that is consistently good or very good, but the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is too high. The overall quality of teaching has not improved since the last inspection.

Short-term planning is sound and often good. The pupils' learning was guided by clear objectives that were properly explained to them at the start of lessons. However, while many lesson plans were detailed they were insufficiently informed by attainment data. In most lessons, work was well prepared, carefully structured and effectively explained. In general, the teachers worked hard to create a positive atmosphere by fostering good relationships and by the regular use of praise. However, when exaggerated praise was offered it proved counter-productive. Furthermore the teachers' best efforts were frequently undermined by the pupils' indifference and by the challenging, rude and occasionally confrontational behaviour of a significant proportion of pupils. A prompt start to lessons was often prevented by the pupils' leisurely arrival; they took too long to settle and there were frequent instances of pupils ignoring the teachers' reasonable requests to get started. The climate for learning is not yet secure; behaviour management is fragile in many classrooms.

The best teaching was lively, engaging and had high expectations of work and behaviour. Work in these lessons was focused carefully on the pupils' individual learning needs and was very well directed and managed. The best lessons used good resources to make the pupils' learning stimulating and interesting. Effective questioning encouraged all the pupils to participate in discussions and enabled the lessons to proceed at a brisk pace.

In the lessons that were unsatisfactory or poor, the pupils made little or no progress either because the teachers' expectations were too low or because learning was not managed effectively.

The quality of learning correlated closely with that of teaching, but lagged slightly behind. It was at least satisfactory in 32 lessons, including 19 in which the pupils made good progress. The pupils' progress was uneven within and between lessons and was unsatisfactory overall.

Systems for assessing and tracking the pupils' progress and achievement are developing suitably. The school has an overview of the pupils' progress, and uses assessment data to inform target setting and intervention for pupils in Years 9 and Year 11. Target setting in the sixth form is well established, but elsewhere the pupils were often unaware of their targets, and many could not identify their current level of attainment. Routine marking is often good but is unsatisfactory

overall because the frequency and quality of marking remain variable; in too many books the pupils are not routinely given information on the standard of their work or how to improve it or how to achieve their targets. Many pupils had little idea of the level that they ought to achieve and are not given sufficient guidance on how to improve.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory. They were satisfactory or better in three quarters of the lessons overall, but in a lower proportion of Year 10 lessons. Attitudes and behaviour were good or better in two fifths of the lessons. Although a growing proportion of the pupils now conform to the reasonable expectations of the teachers in the classroom, there were too many incidents which involved direct challenge or refusal to work by individuals. A number of the pupils used obscene language to each other, and on some occasions in front of the teacher, without being disciplined. In some lessons, teachers were seen to allow individuals to do little or no work for lengthy periods of time. The tolerance of unsatisfactory behaviour in these lessons made it harder for teachers in other lessons to maintain their higher expectations of work and behaviour.

Pupils showed positive attitudes to learning where the teaching was interesting and well-resourced, although there were occasions when the pupils' attitudes remained passive despite good teaching.

Behaviour around the school was generally satisfactory and good humoured but, on occasions, spilled over into boisterousness which created problems in some of the more confined spaces such as the staircases. Pupils arriving late for lessons were often too noisy when there were few adults available to supervise their movements. However, vandalism has been reduced significantly. In a survey, the pupils reported lower levels of concern about the extent of bullying and poor behaviour than they did a year ago, but the figures were still much too high with two thirds of the pupils feeling that their peers do not behave well.

The use of fixed-term exclusion as a sanction is now much lower than it has been for several years. However, the number of pupils who have had fixed-term exclusions of more than 15 days is still higher than it was two years ago, despite being less than half of the figure for last year. During the spring term a number of pupils were excluded for very lengthy periods of up to 45 days. There has been one permanent exclusion. The number of pupils being sent to spend time out of lessons has stayed relatively stable, but varies significantly between subjects.

The school's strategy for improving the pupils' behaviour has been based on the use of the Student Achievement Centre to provide a system of support facilities for pupils with behavioural and learning needs. The centre provides some short-term facilities for pupils who have been sent out of lessons and some longer term

support as an alternative to exclusion. It is doing much good work but some pupils have difficulties in conforming to the expected level of behaviour. The Student Achievement Centre also provides good support for pupils who do not attend school regularly. The use of a school counsellor is valuable.

The pupils' attendance has continued to rise slowly since 2001-2, when it was only 84 per cent. However, the improvement has been much too slow to have any significant impact on standards and the rate for this school year to the end of May was just under 87 per cent, which is slightly below the school's target. In the most recent weeks for which attendance data was available, the attendance of Year 8 was 89 per cent, for Year 9 it was 84 per cent and for Year 11 it was 83 per cent; Year 10 were on work experience and recorded unusually high figures. During the inspection, 78 per cent of Year 8 to Year 10 pupils were present in the lessons. Attendance in classes was much lower in the less able groups.

Punctuality is generally unsatisfactory. Approximately 60 pupils were observed arriving more than five minutes late for school on the second morning of the inspection, using a number of different entrances. Their names were not recorded by the member of staff on duty. Punctuality to lessons is a continuing problem, partially caused by the elongated layout of the school buildings; however, a substantial proportion of the pupils were late for lessons immediately after break when there was no problem with travelling between the buildings.

Explicit references to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development were included in lesson plans. However, while some subjects such as art and religious education made strong contributions to these areas, the references were not followed through sufficiently in most lessons.

Planned themes were used effectively in assemblies and registration periods. In a Year 8 assembly, the pupils entered quietly, listened attentively and withdrew sensibly; there was an appropriate moment of reflection, observed with respect by the pupils. The teachers used the time well in registration periods and ensured a focussed and positive experience for pupils. However, no time was given for meaningful reflection in the registration periods and so the statutory requirement for schools to conduct a daily act of collective worship was not met.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher has continued to provide a clear vision for the school and has restructured the management team. Most appointments have now been made and an almost complete team should be in place in September. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the formation of eight new faculties to provide the locus for change. The intention is that these middle managers will play a key role in ongoing school improvement. Consistency across the eight faculties is being provided by a

learning board consisting of middle managers and chaired by an associate headteacher. The time given to the restructuring means that rapid progress is now required from this new structure if the school is to meet its target date for removal of special measures.

The headteacher has a sound overview of the strengths and areas for improvement in the teaching staff. He skilfully involved staff in the writing of the school's self evaluation which provided a clear and thorough background for this inspection. However, there was more detail about the activities completed than the perceptive evaluation of their impact, and the section on standards was over generous.

The senior management team has received training on classroom observation and a monitoring programme has been established. Paired observations have been completed to help achieve greater consistency. There is more information now available on teaching; however, the information is incomplete because not all teachers have been monitored.

The development of lesson planning has been a success. Nearly all teachers make good, consistent use of the common format and increasing consideration is given to matching the work to the needs of the pupils in each class. There is greater and more explicit inclusion of cross-curricular aspects. However, the impact of the improved planning on the quality of teaching was inconsistent.

The curriculum continues to be developed and provides a wide range of relevant courses of study for all pupils. Innovative work has taken place on the creation of coherent pathways across Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Overdue changes to the timetable are to be made for next September to help improve the pupils' punctuality to lessons. This is urgent as current lateness to lessons reduces the teaching time by up to an hour every day.

The management of attitudes and punctuality has not been effective. The pupils arrived late to lessons not only because of the distance they had to travel but because of their diffidence to their learning. The pupils' attitudes remain a significant area of concern as insufficient attention has been given to implementing common codes of behaviour and reducing disaffection.

The governing body is well led by the chair of governors who has a clear understanding of the urgent improvements required to enable the school to address the key issues. Named governors work in teams to collect information, question staff and report back to the governing body. The governors are fully aware of the need to change the culture of the school to one where all the learners enjoy and value learning. Changes have begun, most notably in the teaching staff where there is a much greater readiness to embrace improvements, but these have

only started to scratch the surface of the deeper underlying issues that have to be addressed. However, there is greater optimism amongst the governing body and teaching staff and an increased commitment to further progress.

The LEA's commentary and statement of action is good overall. It provides a clear background to the developments before and after the school was made subject to special measures and identifies an appropriate range of action to help the school make the improvements needed. While the LEA sensibly recognises that the target date of spring 2006 will be very challenging for the school, it is committed to achieving this result through intensive focused support. The development of the coherent and consistent programme of monitoring has been particularly helpful. The LEA is well placed to help the school make the further improvements needed.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: to raise the pupils' achievement by improving the quality of teaching and learning, particularly the expectations of what pupils can do

A sound policy for learning and teaching has been developed. The school has laid down clear guidelines for lesson planning and has introduced a range of classroom management protocols to improve the consistency of classroom practice. Lesson planning is systematically monitored and evaluated, and has achieved consistency, but other changes have been less effective. The school is developing strategies to address weaknesses in teaching, but these are not yet fully in place. Weekly training sessions for staff are planned for next year and 35 teachers have volunteered to take part in a pilot coaching programme.

The school has taken reasonable steps to address this key issue, but the impact is limited. The overall progress on this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 2: to improve the pupils' attitudes to learning and their attendance and punctuality

The school has clear policies and procedures for the management of behaviour but less evident strategies for improving the pupils' attitudes to learning. There is general agreement among staff and pupils that standards of behaviour have improved, but there is much less certainty about how the pupils' attitudes compare with what is found nationally. Key indicators, such as the use of exclusion, may be misleading as the policy for the use of exclusion has changed and there has been greater reliance on the Student Achievement Centre. Useful information shows a decreasing number of pupils making repeated visits to the "Time Out" facility and the isolation room. Despite the fall in numbers, 12 per cent of the pupils were excluded from their lessons for at least one day during the spring term. However,

the reliability of the data is undermined by the teachers' inconsistent application of sanctions; swearing and refusal to work were tolerated in some classes, but not in others.

The school does not have effective systems for managing attendance and punctuality. A system of electronic registration is being introduced, but at present is only used by a minority of the teachers. The impact of the educational welfare service on attendance has been limited due to a recent lengthy period when no officer was available, a situation which has only recently been rectified. The use of legal sanctions by the LEA has not yet begun. The school has been trying to raise the profile of attendance around the school, but its own targets are based too broadly on the baseline figure rather than including a reference to the proportion of pupils achieving a good level. While the management of the school gates has been altered to provide greater control over late arrivals in the morning, some pupils easily circumvented these controls.

Teachers have been provided with data that enable them to make judgements about whether the pupils' late arrival to lessons is justified. However, the time allowances are generous and create uncertainty in some teachers' minds about what constitutes lateness. Consequently, there is considerable inconsistency in the actions taken on punctuality.

Progress on this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 3: to ensure that policies, systems and strategies are consistently translated into practice and that senior managers rigorously apply monitoring systems that enable them to tackle underperformance

Policies, systems and strategies are being increasingly translated into practice. For example, a good start has been made in developing systematic monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. The LEA has trained senior managers in lesson observation, through paired observations. Strengths and areas for development have been properly fed back from these observations, both to teachers and to the faculties. This information has given the senior management team a more accurate overview of the quality of teaching, areas for improvement and teachers' individual development needs. It has also developed the capacity of middle managers to evaluate provision.

While underperformance remains, particularly in the pupils' attitudes and punctuality and in the continued inconsistency in the quality of teaching, the overall progress on this key issue is reasonable.