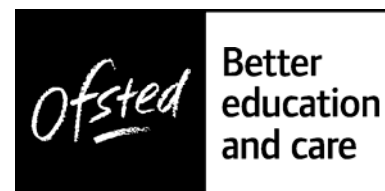


Preston Support Centre
Ringway House
Ringway
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 3HQ

Direct Tel 0800 389 5686
Direct Fax 01772 565353/565299

www.ofsted.gov.uk



28 April 2005

Mr M Lacey
Parson Street Primary School
Bedminster Road
Bedminster
Bristol
BS3 5NR

Dear Mr Lacey

Implementation of Parson Street Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 April 2005, with my colleague Mr John Francis, Additional Inspector, I write to confirm the findings and to notify you of the outcomes.

As you know, the inspection was part of a policy involving a broader series of visits by HMI and Additional Inspectors to check on the development and improvement of schools which have been designated by their section 10 inspection as having serious weaknesses. You will recall that 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 and removing the causes of the serious weaknesses.

During the visit we inspected 17 lessons or part lessons; attended two registration periods and an assembly; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with you, nominated staff, the chair of governors and a representative of the LEA on the areas for improvement identified in the section 10 inspection. We also examined a range of pupils' work and spoke informally with other staff and pupils.

On the basis of the evidence gathered during the visit, we made the following observations to you, the chair of governors, and two representatives of the LEA.

In 2004, the standards achieved by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 were well below the national average. In comparison with schools where similar proportions of pupils are entitled to take free school meals, they were well below average in Year 2, and below average in Year 6. The pupils in Year 6 had made average progress since Year 2.

Children enter the nursery with levels of attainment below those expected. They make satisfactory progress through the nursery, and good progress in reception. When they leave reception, the majority of children are achieving or close to achieving the expected standards in most of the areas of learning. The strong emphasis on children's personal and social development leads to good standards. Children form constructive relationships, co-operate well, understand the classroom routines and settle quickly to their tasks.

The leadership of the Foundation Stage is good. The recently appointed stage leader, with support from the LEA, has produced a good action plan clearly aimed at addressing the weaknesses identified. The impact of this can be already be seen. Changes to planning, assessment and recording give greater consistency to the provision across both nursery and reception classes. Common systems promote continuity, and planning makes suitable provision for both the full-time and part-time children in the nursery.

Attainment in English remains below average, particularly in aspects of writing. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory. There is a good focus on developing pupils' skills of speaking and listening by using simple strategies that can be applied to most subjects. For example, time is given for pupils to hold short discussions with a partner about aspects of their work. This helps to build confidence and enables pupils to make gains in understanding the main points of discussion and to respond appropriately. The planning for lessons is beginning to highlight where speaking and listening are to be promoted so that they can be at the forefront of the teaching, and can also be easily checked by senior managers. Speaking is encouraged through practical collaborative tasks such as investigations in science and, for example in religious education, where pupils in Year 6 had prepared good questions in their previous lesson in preparation for the visit of the local vicar.

At both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, the pupils lack appropriate skills in writing. Too few pupils write well or extensively with imagination, and the content of their work is often narrow. Grammatical errors are common and pupils' spelling is weak, often showing a lack of understanding of common spelling rules. Pupils have limited strategies for tackling new words. Their use of punctuation is often inaccurate and younger pupils do not securely use capital letters and full stops. Pupils write for different audiences and for different purposes, for example, writing simple instructions, but their independent writing skills are unsatisfactory. The pupils' presentation of written work is variable. A few pupils write neatly with good letter formation and have developed a suitable cursive style. Other pupils, however, do not write as well and their work is often untidy. Many pupils have poor letter formation and poor pencil grip, and this slows their rate of work.

Pupils respond to a range of texts at an increasingly challenging level though overall, reading remains below average. Pupils benefit from reading regularly and the focus on guided reading activities is giving better structure to pupils' learning. Their understanding of the basic points is satisfactory, but most pupils are much less skilled at making inferences and understanding underlying messages.

Subject leadership is satisfactory but some weaknesses in aspects of the subject management remain, where monitoring still needs to be more regular and rigorous.

Pupils' achievement in mathematics has improved since the school's inspection. It is supported by a well-designed action plan. Curricular targets are used effectively throughout the school to drive forward the quality of learning and teaching, and the raising of standards. The rigour with which lessons are monitored has improved, and lesson observation leads to the agreement of areas for development that are directly related to pupils' progress. Laptop computers and interactive whiteboards are used effectively. Pupils' books are often marked well, and assessment has improved. Nevertheless, a legacy of underachievement and confusion continues to limit the achievement of pupils, including lower attaining pupils in Year 6.

The raising of pupils' achievement in science is supported by a well-designed action plan. Science has sufficient presence within the timetables of all the classes. Teachers plan their lessons to develop the pupils' social and scientific needs: at times there is insufficient emphasis on the latter, so that the development of scientific skills, and of knowledge and understanding, are not closely linked.

The range and quality of computer hardware have improved, and there are now more varied programs to support teaching and learning across subjects, although not all is of high quality. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards in classrooms to enhance their lessons, and make information and communication technology (ICT) a regular part of their planning and teaching. The full curriculum can now be covered but further work is needed to embed aspects such as the regular use of email or programs that enable pupils to give instructions to control events. There is more effective coverage for teaching ICT skills and better cross-curricular links between ICT and other subjects. However, the longer-term cross-curricular plans do not make sufficient reference to the skills to be developed or how they are to be integrated into work. The subject management is satisfactory and the well thought out and very detailed subject action plan is clearly aimed at moving the school forward rapidly. The current limitations in the record keeping and assessment procedures are being addressed through a new system that will come into use alongside the revised curriculum.

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all the lessons seen. It was good in two lessons, and very good in a further lesson. There was a close match between the quality of teaching, and the progress made by pupils. Teaching assistants contribute effectively to lessons.

The teachers' classroom organisation and management are good, and they use subject vocabulary well. Lessons are planned effectively. Some of the tasks set – for example writing speeches for election to the school council in Year 6 – are engaging. However, the teachers' questioning of pupils is frequently undifferentiated, brief, and addressed at only one level of attainment. Some teachers miss cues from pupils to reinforce, and build links with, prior learning.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in all the lessons seen. They were good in five lessons, and very good in a further lesson. There were some pupils with very good attitudes and behaviour in almost all the lessons seen. Occasional instances of challenging behaviour were resolved well. Pupils are generally keen to learn, but some lack the confidence and skills needed to learn effectively. The school's appropriate emphasis on developing the pupils' social skills, in particular their ability to work collaboratively in groups and teams, draws attention to those pupils who find this more difficult, but is a wise investment in enhancing the learning skills of pupils in the medium to long term.

Pupils behave responsibly as they move around the school, and during breaks. The limited outdoor space on the school site is utilised and supervised effectively at lunchtime, and a wide range of activity, some of it mixed-age, ensues. Pupils are kind to peers who find it difficult to fit into the school community.

The leadership and management of the school have improved. The open and collaborative leadership style of the headteacher is welcomed by the teachers. The self-evaluation prepared at short notice by the headteacher is accurate, and of high quality. The involvement of all members of the school community in the development of a vision statement enhances the ethos of the school.

The governance of the school has developed substantially. Governors have embraced the opportunity to develop their role as the headteacher's critical friend, and to play their part in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The development of the school's action plan was used as a catalyst for enhancing the governors' role, which is supported by training. The governors contribute effectively to the strategic management of the school's improvement. Vacancies on the governing body have been filled strategically.

The school's action plan is good. It is clear and succinct and sets out what needs to be done and who will lead each development. Its organisation shows a clear sense of priority and urgency, and reflects the common sense of purpose and high expectations with which this school plans to secure its improvement. The approaches to evaluating progress are rigorous.

The LEA's commentary is thorough, and its statement of action is good. The commentary outlines the support the school has received, and will receive, and reflects its close work alongside the school. The statement of action is integrated with the school's action plan, and commits the LEA to extensive and coherent support for the school. This has already proved very useful to the school, and has helped it to secure its improvement.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: To raise standards of achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT:

Progress is reasonable in mathematics, science and ICT, but more limited in English. Progress overall is reasonable.

2: To secure effective leadership and management across all levels of the organisation

The leadership of the Foundation Stage, the quality of the school's self-evaluation and the standard of governance have all improved significantly. Progress overall is good.

3: To raise levels of attendance by working proactively with pupils, parents and other agencies

A wide range of appropriate strategies are in place, including reward systems that are popular with the pupils. There has already been a small increase in overall attendance. The school has made reasonable progress.

Reasonable progress has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the school's serious weaknesses.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for the City of Bristol. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

DR JANET MILLS
Additional Inspector

cc: chair of governors
LEA