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10 May 2005

Mr A Rist
Headteacher
West Winch Primary School
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Dear Mr Rist

Implementation of West Winch Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 27 and 28 April 2005, with my colleague Mike Milton, 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 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 18 lessons or part lessons; attended four registration periods and two assemblies; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with you and nominated staff 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, I made the following observations to you, representatives of the governing body and the LEA.

The pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are generally in line with those expected for their age. They make good and on occasions very good progress in the reception class. Staff in this area have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve and provide them with a range of interesting activities that capture their imagination and motivate them to learn. These activities are matched well to their levels of ability and take account of their maturity. The pupils'

attainment across the six areas of learning is above average; the pupils' mathematical development is also above average.

In the 2004 national tests, standards in Key Stage 1 were in line with or above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The pupils' achievement was similar to national figures for schools in similar socio-economic contexts. In the Key Stage 2 national tests, standards were below or well below both the national average and the average for schools where the pupils' prior attainment was similar. Many of the most able pupils did not reach their potential in English, mathematics and science.

Standards in English lessons are in line with and occasionally above those expected for the pupils' ages. The pupils in Year R and Year 1 make very good progress in their basic literacy skills. Standards of speaking and listening are above average in all years. Reading skills are slightly above those expected for the ages of the pupils, many of whom read with fluency and accuracy. The pupils listen attentively to their teachers, talk with confidence and contribute well to lessons. Writing in most classes is sound but spelling remains variable. The pupils' use of adjectives and adverbs was good; however, the use of paragraphs to sequence information requires further development. The standard of handwriting varies considerably between that produced in exercise books and that written on specialist paper. Many pupils in Year 5 still write in pencil.

Pupils' attainment in mathematics is improving. In Year 2, standards are close to those expected for the age of the pupils. Although more able pupils are using their knowledge of number facts to process calculations to 20, some pupils need to use practical apparatus. In Year 6, many pupils are accurate in their use of multiplication tables and recognise equivalent fractions, decimals and percentages, but a number of pupils are working at levels below those expected.

The quality of teaching has improved and was satisfactory or better in all lessons. Teaching was very good in one lesson and good in nine. At the time of the last inspection, one in six lessons was unsatisfactory. The features of the most effective teaching were: detailed lesson plans that addressed the pupils' learning needs; clear whole-class instruction, firmly linked to shared learning objectives; well-paced sessions that included regular feedback to the pupils; challenging questions and carefully modelled responses which made good use of key vocabulary; and well-targeted support from teaching assistants, helping the effective management of behaviour. Where the teaching was satisfactory overall, the following weaknesses were apparent to some degree: tasks or questions lacked challenge; learning support assistants were not effectively deployed; and time was not always well used.

The gains in learning were satisfactory or better in all lessons; they were good or better in ten lessons, in which brisk and sharply focused teaching engaged the

pupils' attention. In these lessons the pupils worked with a determined focus and showed pride in their achievements. In lessons in which this did not happen, there was some immature behaviour.

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Dialogue with LEA consultants is helping to refine cross-curricular planning. A good range of after-school activities, including sailing and cricket is organised, with support from Sport England. The school does not have sufficient space to provide indoor sports activities for older pupils, although the governors have plans to dispose of an overflow car park and to construct a sports barn.

The school has improved its assessment and tracking of the pupils' progress, with help from the Intensifying Support Programme organised by the LEA. Curricular targets are set for groups of pupils and their progress is assessed every half term. Some initial steps have been taken to develop a tracking system that will record the pupils' progress as they move through the school; however, much remains to be done. In reception, there are effective systems of assessment that inform subsequent planning and teaching so that work is well matched to the pupils' differing learning needs. The school's new marking policy is not used consistently, although marking is regular and includes helpful comments.

The pupils' attitudes to learning have improved since the last monitoring visit, and they made a significant contribution to several lessons. The pupils' personal development was satisfactory in all the lessons and good or better on 13 occasions. The pupils often sustained their concentration through significant periods of whole-class teaching by asking questions and contributing ideas. Since the last monitoring visit, the deputy headteacher has become a leading behaviour teacher for the LEA. There has been only one fixed-term exclusion since the start of the school year. The pupils move around the school quietly and with consideration for others. Behaviour can be boisterous at playtime in the congested junior playground but the use of the school field in fine weather reduces the pressure on space.

Since September 2004 the school has received significant support from the LEA as part of the Intensifying Support Programme. The LEA has guided the work in curriculum review and quality assurance developed by the school. The LEA has exceeded the commitments in the statement of action; its support for financial issues and the quality of learning has been important.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher took up post in April 2004 and the roles of the senior management team were redefined following the previous HMI monitoring visit; however, staff absence has limited the capacity of this group. The procedures for monitoring the quality of

teaching and learning are sound but inconsistencies in methodology and the identification of areas for improvement remain. The evaluation of the school's progress through the interpretation of data is developing. The headteacher has a sound understanding of the improvements needed but the prioritisation of key tasks needs to be reviewed and delegated responsibilities redefined until the senior leadership team is at full strength. Middle managers have a satisfactory understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have the capacity to make a greater contribution. The self-evaluation conducted prior to this monitoring visit was satisfactory.

In order to maintain the progress made so far, the headteacher staff and governors need to: increase the proportion of good teaching available; and develop a whole-school assessment system that ensures that work is well matched to the pupils' learning needs.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: improve leadership and management by the headteacher and the governing body

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Reasonable progress has been made on all the areas for improvement required in the inspection report. The governing body has been reorganised and the members work effectively with the headteacher; governance is satisfactory. The leadership of the school has the capacity to secure the improvements required.

Progress on this area for improvement is reasonable.

2: raise attainment and improve achievement in English, mathematics, science and religious education

On this visit, improvements in religious education were not monitored. The school's recently established target-setting procedures provide evidence of improving progress. A review of the pupils' books confirms that standards are improving and are generally in line with those expected for the pupils' ages.

Progress on this area for improvement is reasonable.

3: improve the quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The school has established a sound system for monitoring the quality of teaching and improving performance. Teaching has improved significantly since the inspection of March 2004 and was good or better in

just over half the lessons. Learning support assistants often make a valuable contribution; however, a more consistent approach to their deployment is to be considered under the guidance of the recently appointed Advanced Skills Teacher.

Progress on this area for improvement is reasonable.

4: use assessment information to help teachers meet the needs of all pupils

Assessment and tracking systems have been established through the school's involvement with the Intensifying Support Programme.

The school is making reasonable progress on this area for improvement.

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 Norfolk. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

DAVID JONES
HM Inspector of Schools