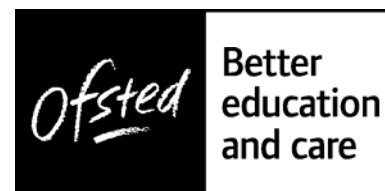


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21 June 2005

Mr R Butler
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Butler

Implementation of Pewsey Vale School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 23 May with my colleague Nigel Warwick, 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 twenty two parts of lessons; attended two registration sessions and an assembly. We also visited the learning resources centre and a social skills session for Year 8; 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 inspection of November 2004. 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 and vice-chair of the governing body and the LEA senior secondary advisor.

There have been no further national or public examinations results since the November 2004 inspection. At that time the pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations was found to be satisfactory, the results having improved in line with national trends over the previous five years. The school's results in the national

end-of-key-stage tests were below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school's targets for the 2005 examinations are similar to 2004, although this cohort of pupils came in with lower attainment levels than the previous year group. Most of the pupils make good progress as they move through the school. The standards in lessons were broadly in line with national age-related expectations.

The quality of teaching and learning is broadly satisfactory. The quality of teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson, satisfactory in thirteen, good in seven and very good in one. The characteristics of the well-taught lessons included: a rich variety of stimuli; clear exposition of subject matter; positive relationships between teachers and pupils; good one-to-one help for the pupils; good use of resources; productive inputs from teaching assistants with individual pupils, and an appropriate match of work to the pupils' needs. The characteristics of the weaker lessons included: starter activities that went on for too long; too slow a pace; some under-expectation of lower-attaining pupils and insufficient development of subject knowledge. In some lessons the pupils' weak attitudes to learning were not well-managed, and insufficient time was left for a worthwhile final plenary session.

The quality of learning is lagging slightly behind that of teaching. The quality of learning was unsatisfactory in three lessons, satisfactory in twelve, good in six and very good in one. Some key reasons for this were: teaching that did not sufficiently engage the pupils; a failure to apply the behaviour management policy and some pupils' weak attitudes to learning.

The pupils' behaviour is generally good. Around the school the pupils were helpful, friendly, and usually courteous to each other and to visiting adults. Between lessons the pupils were orderly and generally moved to lessons promptly. During breaks the pupils interacted in a friendly way in small and larger groups both in and around the school buildings.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory or better in 20 lessons and in just over half of these their response was good. The pupils were usually receptive to the teachers' questions, willing to engage in the activities provided and were generally attentive to the teachers' instructions. However there was a degree of low-level disruption from a few pupils; this was addressed firmly by class teachers and teaching assistants, but not always successfully enough. In some classes where the teaching was satisfactory the pupils' attention span, particularly the lower-attaining pupils, was unsatisfactory. The number of incidences of internal exclusions has reduced. The numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions have risen as the school firmly applies its behaviour management policy.

Spiritual, moral, social and culture provision is being addressed in a number of ways. The planned development, from September 2005, of personal, social and health education and the citizenship programme by a specialist team of teachers has already started. A review of the assembly programme and a consideration of more purposeful use of tutorial time are currently in hand. Productive links have been established with local churches and the community. Continuing links with schools overseas are enhancing cultural development. Displays around the school's corridors promote awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements. A Year 7 assembly was linked to a recent personal, social and health education lesson and the pupils were challenged to think about social and moral issues. However, there was little interaction between the speaker and the pupils and there was insufficient opportunity for pupils to reflect on the issues raised. The school council is developing the pupils' social skills, enhancing their levels of responsibility and increasing their involvement in whole school issues.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher is providing very good leadership and management. The systems and procedures he has introduced provide a very clear and well documented basis to the school's work. The capacity of the senior leadership team has been increased by the addition of an assistant headteacher and the delegation of non-teaching tasks to administrators. There should be another increase in capacity when further responsibilities are delegated to new staff in September. Members of the senior leadership team are working effectively together and each member is clear about their roles. Weaknesses in middle management are expected to be addressed by appointments from September 2005 to modern foreign languages, music, and information and communication technology. Established subject leaders have begun to understand their broader responsibilities in the school's improvement and are increasingly being held to account for them.

The governing body responded quickly to the criticisms directed towards them in the inspection of November 2004. A new chair and vice-chair were elected and the governing body has been reorganised and re-energised. Governors have undertaken additional training and are taking an active and appropriate role in the working life of the school. There is strong mutual respect and effective communication between the governors and the school staff at all levels. The new chair and vice-chair are providing a very high level of leadership and management and are fulfilling the demanding role outlined in the Ofsted action plan.

The school's action plan is satisfactory and sensibly groups the four areas for improvement into three broad headings. Actions, personnel, target dates, resources and procedures for monitoring and evaluation are clearly defined. The action plan involves the leadership team, middle managers and governors appropriately. Although the structure of the monitoring, evaluation and review programme is excellent and has enabled the school to clearly identify its strengths

and weaknesses; there are insufficient sharply focussed quantitative targets against which the governors might measure progress in the medium and short term.

The LEA's commentary and statement of action are good. The school experienced a period of change and upheaval in the twelve months prior to the inspection of November 2004. The LEA had only a limited involvement in the school during the tenure of the previous headteacher who held the post for 22 years. The LEA supported the school in the appointment of a new headteacher in January 2004 following the resignation of the previous headteacher. Although school places are needed in the area, reflecting local demographics, numbers are predicted to continue to fall over the next few years. The LEA has confidence in the governing body and the senior management team and has not appointed additional governors nor has it suspended the delegated budget. The LEA statement of action is comprehensive; it includes both the plans for support and a detailed note on how the support will be evaluated; it is also fully costed.

The LEA has provided a range of support which has been valued by the school. A detailed and well-judged evaluation of the impact of the school's actions was carried out in February by the LEA. The areas identified for developments are sound and include those identified by HMI during this inspection.

There has been a significant building improvement programme in the school which has enhanced the learning environment. It includes the re-siting and refurbishment of the learning and resources centre; the refurbishment of technology rooms and the extension of the information and communication technology facilities.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: monitor more rigorously the newly introduced policies on behaviour management and assessment in order to ensure consistent implementation across the school

A comprehensive assessment policy was put in place just before the November 2004 inspection. Satisfactory progress has been made in its implementation. The school is focussing on marking, promoted by whole-school and departmental discussions, which is monitored through lesson observations and a scrutiny of the pupils' work. However inconsistencies in marking remain and too few pupils follow up comments made about their work.

The school's development of its assessment database is good. The appointment of a data manager has facilitated the process of entering and accessing attainment data. The data is used to inform discussion with pupils and in reporting to parents

according to a clear annual schedule. End-of-key stage targets for individual pupils are in place, and pupils in need of additional support and intervention are being identified. The school is aware of the need to develop the roles of pastoral leaders, form tutors and subject staff in implementing the clearly stated policy on tracking pupils' progress.

Progress on this aspect of the area for improvement is reasonable.

The school's comprehensive behaviour management policy was implemented shortly before the November 2004 inspection. Its implementation is having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour both around the school and in the classroom, the latter monitored through lesson observation. The pupils have recognised the link between the quality of teaching and their attitudes and behaviour in lessons.

The school is enhancing its use of rewards and the celebration of pupils' success has an increasing profile. However, the school recognises the need to continue to monitor the use of rewards, and to match them to pupils' age and maturity and to ensure consistent use across subjects and teachers.

The anti-bullying statement within the policy is not sufficiently detailed, although the practice in this context is acknowledged by pupils to be good.

Progress on this area for improvement is good

2: improve the quality of teaching and learning in all subjects to bring it up to the level of the very best

The lesson-planning format and the form on which lesson observation judgements are recorded have been reviewed and developed. The school reports that there is more consistency in the stating of lesson objectives, planning for the inclusion of cross-curricular issues, the delivery of three-part lessons, match of provision to the range of pupils' needs, and attention to the implementation of the school's behaviour management policy.

The lesson observation programme is comprehensive and thorough, and it is providing perceptive feedback to teachers on issues to address, develop and improve. There is some sharing of good practice through peer observation and departmental discussions and this is leading to increasing requests from staff to be trained in observational skills.

Progress on this area for improvement is reasonable.

3: produce a longer-term improvement plan, drawing on all of the resources available, using external help and advice to ensure effective measures

The school has a detailed school improvement plan for 2004-2005 covering all aspects of its work. However, the success criteria are mainly qualitative and the plan could benefit from more quantitative criteria. The headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body have begun work on a longer term vision for the school and are expected to return to it at the end of the summer term. These preliminary discussions need to be completed and discussed with all the relevant parties as soon as is practicable.

Limited progress has been made on this area for improvement

4: improve the quality of provision, leadership and management of all subjects and areas of school performance with clear accountability for improvement targets

The Key Stage 4 curriculum was revised in September 2004 in order to introduce more vocational courses. The further revisions planned for September 2005 should make the curriculum compliant with statutory requirements. Leadership and management at all levels in the school have improved since the November 2004 inspection.

Reasonable progress has been made on this area for improvement.

Meeting statutory requirements

From September the pupils will receive their curriculum entitlement in information and communication technology, music, and citizenship. The school is currently reviewing its arrangements for personal, social, health and citizenship education along with its arrangements for collective worship. Draft policies are expected to be implemented in September 2005.

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 and the chair of governors and the Director, Children, Education and Libraries for Wiltshire. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Susan Kara
HM Inspector of Schools

