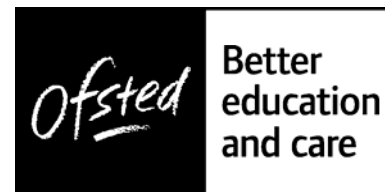


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19 July 2005

Mrs J Dorling
Headteacher
Reedham Primary School
School Hill
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NR13 3TJ

Dear Mrs Dorling

Implementation of Reedham Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 July 2005, 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 I inspected ten lessons or part lessons; attended a registration period and a class assembly; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with you, nominated staff, the chair of governors and two LEA representatives on the areas for improvement identified in the section 10 inspection. I 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, the chair of governors and a representative of the LEA.

In the most recent national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the targets set for the pupils were exceeded at Level 4 and above in English, mathematics and science. The targets at Level 5 were surpassed in science, met in mathematics, but not met in English. The results were well above last year's national figures in English and mathematics at Level 4 and above, but below average in science. Achievement at

Level 5 in mathematics was above the national average, but in English and science it was below average at this level. The results were much better than last year.

The pupils in Year 2 have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The results in this year's national tests were much improved, particularly at the higher Levels of 2b and above, including Level 3. Targets were well exceeded in all three subjects except at Level 3 in reading and writing. Attainment remains below last year's national average in reading and writing, but is above average in mathematics at all levels.

In lessons, standards in English and mathematics were close to the average for all year groups, with evidence of higher achievement by pupils in the youngest class and by pupils in Years 5 and 6. Progress in lessons was almost always satisfactory, and in half of the lessons the pupils made good gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills.

The pupils' attitudes to learning were at least satisfactory and they were good in six of the ten lessons. Most of the pupils are keen, enthusiastic learners. They work well with adults and with each other and enjoy learning. They are friendly and keen to share what they know with teachers and visitors. Behaviour in classrooms and beyond was generally good, but on occasion noise levels were high, mainly due to the pupils' enthusiasm; this made group work with the teacher more difficult.

The quality of teaching was mainly sound; it was good in three lessons, very good in one, and unsatisfactory in one lesson. The latter was due to the lack of targets set for the pupils in their independent reading and writing tasks, which led to insufficient progress being made. Good or better teaching was predominant in the top class and in the reception and Year 1 class. The good teaching in the school is characterised by a clear understanding of the National Curriculum requirements of the subject being taught, appropriate emphasis placed on the skills to be developed, the good pace of teaching and learning, and expectations that are high but realistic. In both key stages, effective use is made of teacher assistants and other adults to support teaching and learning in the classroom.

Throughout the school, the teachers' knowledge of what should be taught in English and mathematics has been enhanced, so that the literacy and numeracy strategies are appropriately planned and taught. For the most part, the teachers are clear in exposition and have good questioning techniques. The pupils' behaviour is nearly always well managed and relationships are good. In some lessons the pupils were asked to work in groups and pairs to discuss their work; this enhanced their learning, but the strategy was too rarely used. The pupils who have special educational needs are suitably supported throughout the school and they make sound progress overall.

Planning for teaching and learning has greatly improved and lesson plans are shared with the classroom assistants. The plans include clear learning objectives and differentiated activities to address the needs of all the pupils, including those

with special educational needs and the gifted and talented pupils. They also include opportunities for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the lessons.

The teachers are integrating cross-curricular links into lessons to support learning. For instance, in a good design and technology lesson, types of houses, building materials, two and three-dimensional shapes, and spelling were all discussed, reinforcing previous learning in geography, science, mathematics and English. Across the school the pupils used ICT to record stories, pictures and information on computers; on display there were examples of rotational symmetry work in mathematics and computer-produced posters on health and safety.

With the support of the LEA, monitoring procedures have started. The LEA has monitored the school's progress against the issues in the action plan and provided useful advice. Joint lesson observations have been undertaken with LEA advisers, samples of work for numeracy and literacy have been scrutinised by all the staff, planning has been regularly monitored, some moderation has taken place, and an analysis of the pupils' responses in the recent national and optional tests has been completed, although not yet used to inform the focus of teaching. The school has produced a programme for monitoring teaching and learning from the start of the autumn term. However, to ensure that monitoring is fully effective in facilitating change, more detail is required about the different types of monitoring to be carried out, the focus of the monitoring, who is to do it and when, and how recording and feedback will be carried out.

The issues raised as a result of monitoring are being addressed. All the teachers are now using a common planning format; teaching in the mixed Years 2, 3 and 4 class is better organised and includes a planned role for the classroom assistants; there is explicit planning for the needs of the high and low ability pupils in each class. As a result of scrutiny of the pupils' workbooks, issues such as writing, sentence structure, presentation and marking are focal points for improvement.

Assessment procedures are at an embryonic stage of development. Tracking of the pupils' progress over time in literacy and numeracy, the analysis of test results, marking procedures, and the identification of gifted and talented pupils are part of this process. The staff are not yet fully familiar with these systems, but this information is beginning to be used to set appropriate targets for individuals and groups, and to inform planning for teaching throughout the school.

The quality of leadership has improved and there has been a considerable cultural change within the school. The headteacher has an enhanced understanding of what needs to be done; she and her staff are committed to improving provision and practice and they are working hard and effectively to address the main issues. This is a very small school with the equivalent to three full-time teachers. As a result of staff changes, curriculum responsibilities have been redistributed. There has been some training on subject leadership, but targets have not been clearly specified and performance management has yet to be fully established.

The school's action plan is satisfactory overall with some weaknesses. It addresses all the concerns identified in the report. It sets out what needs to be done and who will lead each development. However, too much responsibility has been taken on by the headteacher. Actions are appropriate and success criteria are focused and, in relation to teaching and standards, are quantifiable; targets for Key Stage 1 English need to present reading and writing as separate entities. Monitoring and evaluation roles are heavily allocated to the LEA and there will need to be a transition of responsibility to the school. The school's assessment of progress against the areas for improvement is sound, although more evaluation against the success criteria would give a better overview of how far they have progressed.

The governors have recently undertaken training to increase their understanding of monitoring, and the chair of governors has already monitored behaviour, health and safety, and differentiation within planning and the pupil's workbooks. There are significant changes about to be made to the composition of the governing body, including changes to the chair and vice-chair. Subject responsibilities for the governors are to be reviewed and agreed, and training in monitoring and in interpreting the data within the performance and assessment report (PANDA) is to be arranged.

The LEA's commentary and statement cover all that they should and are clear and to the point. Both are satisfactory. The LEA has given significant and effective support to the school. This has been particularly helpful in the guidance given in the management, the planning and the teaching of literacy and numeracy, in helping with the analysis of data, and in the support given to a teacher to improve provision and practice. The LEA has also made it possible for the secondment of a teacher in the autumn term to give additional release time to the headteacher to carry out her leadership and management roles. More needs to be done to ensure that the school gradually takes on a much greater and more rigorous responsibility for its own monitoring and evaluation.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by monitoring teaching, learning and standards rigorously and taking action to address weaknesses

Monitoring has had a significant impact on teaching, learning and standards, but it has been carried out with considerable help from the LEA. The next stage is to develop a greater reliance on the school's own resources to carry out this monitoring in the future. Progress has been reasonable.

2: increase pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science

Improved provision and practice have led to rising standards in English and mathematics; this is evident in test results and in the pupils' work. In addressing

the underachievement in these subjects progress has been good. The underachievement in science is to be addressed from next term.

3: improve teaching, learning and assessment by meeting pupils' differing needs consistently

Progress is reasonable, and it is evident that teachers are now planning to meet the pupils' differing needs. However, more needs to be done to embed assessment procedures so that they are well understood by all the teachers and they are used comprehensively to raise standards.

4: provide greater opportunity for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum

The teachers are now planning explicitly for cross-curricular links and progress is good.

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

This visit has raised some concerns about leadership and management and the school's performance will be monitored.

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

Anne Murrell (HMI retired)
Additional Inspector

cc: chair of governors
LEA