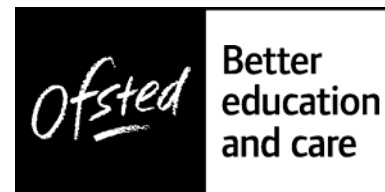


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6 July 2005

Mrs C Bond
Headteacher
Littletown Primary School
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Dear Mrs Bond

Implementation of Littletown Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 27 and 28 June 2005, with my colleague Susan Wheeler HMI, 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 where the section 10 inspection indicated that the school was underachieving. You will recall that the aims of the visit were to assess the progress made in addressing and eliminating underachievement and meeting the targets given in the action plan. We also evaluated standards of achievement and the quality of education, especially in relation to areas of underachievement.

During the visit we inspected 16 lessons or part lessons; attended four registration periods and an assembly; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with yourself and nominated staff on the causes and areas of underachievement. We also examined a range of the 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, your deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and a representative from the LEA.

The action plan provides a satisfactory framework for improvement and raising standards. It identifies: a range of appropriate actions; the people responsible for leading developments; the costing and resource implications; completion dates; and who will be monitoring the impact of initiatives. There are helpful success criteria for each key issue, against which the governors and headteacher can measure the school's progress in the short and medium term. Although some of the criteria are supported with quantifiable targets these are not always sufficiently robust. The plan is sub-divided into actions to be taken for each of the three terms

following the inspection and is further enhanced by posing evaluation questions for each of these sections. The action plan forms the basis of the school improvement plan which includes an additional section on reviewing the whole school curriculum.

The results of the 2004 national tests showed that standards declined at Key Stage 1; no pupils achieved the higher level in writing and a below average proportion achieved this level in reading and mathematics. At Key Stage 2, standards declined in English but showed a modest improvement in mathematics and science; when compared with schools in similar contexts, and using the pupils' prior attainment in the Key Stage 1 tests as an indicator of improvement, the progress of the pupils' was well below average.

The school has received some of the results from the 2005 national tests; these show an improvement, particularly in the number of pupils achieving at the higher Level 3 by the end of Key Stage 1. Although there are more pupils achieving at the higher levels, the school is not meeting its overall targets. The school is aware that the most important measure of progress is through analysis of value added data. At present the reliability of the assessments made for the Foundation Stage Profile is not secure; as a result the school is unable to make accurate predictions of the pupils' potential targets for the end of Key Stage 1.

The standard of the pupils' work seen in a quarter of the lessons was below average; almost all of these lessons were in literacy. The standards in the majority of lessons were satisfactory and in two they were good. Targets for improvement are being set for each pupil and there is evidence to show that the rate of progress is improving. However, this rate of improvement is inconsistent between year groups.

The school is developing good systems for managing and analysing data. This is enabling staff to identify strengths and areas for improvement for classes, groups and individuals. The information collected on writing, and its user friendly presentation demonstrate progress made over time and highlights any discrepancies in performance between parallel classes. This information has yet to be used to hold teachers to account for the progress of their class. The nature of the data analysis has heightened teachers' awareness of its value in planning and in measuring the impact of their teaching on pupils learning. The electronic system adopted by the school does not provide the level of detail required to be most effective. There have been difficulties for the school in accessing LEA training and as a result they are only able to make limited use of the system.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were very good in four lessons, good in six lessons and satisfactory in six lessons. The teachers show respect for the pupils and, as a result, the pupils respond positively. The teachers have high expectations of behaviour and have clear strategies in place to achieve these. Routines are well established and there is a greater use of positive comments to reinforce good behaviour than negativity and sanctions.

The school is a welcoming community with a positive ethos, where the contributions of pupils and adults are valued. The quality of displays throughout the school is very good and helps to create an exciting learning environment. The pupils are polite, courteous and keen to talk about their work and their school. There are good relationships between the staff and the pupils, and between the pupils themselves. They work together quite happily in mixed gender groups and cooperate well in discussions. At break time and lunchtime there are systems in place (the friendship stop and guardian angels) to support pupils who are alone or at risk of getting themselves into trouble.

The quality of teaching was never less than satisfactory. It was very good in three lessons, good in four and satisfactory in nine. The weaker teaching was observed in the Foundation Stage where there was also limited planning and assessment. In the best lessons there were clear learning objectives and every opportunity was used to assess and provide evaluative feedback to the pupils. The pace of learning and teaching matched, and tasks were well designed to meet the needs of individual pupils. The teachers recognised when they needed to change tasks and intervene in the learning process in order to provide greater challenge and ensure progress was good. Teachers effectively assessed the pupils' knowledge and understanding during the lessons, particularly through questioning. Teaching assistants made a worthwhile contribution through their structured observations of whole class activities and their work with groups.

In the weaker lessons, the teaching was mundane and the teachers' exposition was overly long. The pupils spent too long listening to the teacher which unduly challenged their powers of concentration. Tasks were not sufficiently well-matched to the individual needs of the pupils, particularly those of higher ability. The teachers failed to exploit opportunities for further learning when pupils gave answers which were unexpected or not quite what the teacher was seeking. Independent learning skills were underdeveloped and the teachers were not providing the pupils with the strategies to problem solve and make choices. Too frequently there was an undercurrent of chatter which went unchallenged and in one instance sarcasm was used inappropriately as a means of classroom management.

The deputy headteacher, together with the year group leaders, is about to conduct a full review of the curriculum. The aim is to develop a more creative and imaginative curriculum whilst retaining a focus on achievement. It is anticipated that curriculum innovation will build on and use the expertise of existing staff who have been involved in recent action research work.

The quality of the leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She is implementing procedures which will enable the school to move forward systematically. She also has a good understanding of what needs to be done in order to eliminate under achievement, raise standards and increase the rate of the pupils' progress. The deputy headteacher provides good support to the

headteacher and together they form an effective partnership. The senior management team are beginning to provide a clear educational direction and purpose for the work of the school. The roles of the middle managers are developing, but there remain some inconsistencies in their ability to effect change. Strategic planning within the school is secure and there is a firm commitment to establishing a culture of self-evaluation and developing an ethos of continual improvement.

The relatively new chair of the governors is effective in her leadership and proactive in her work with the school. The governors have a formal process of documented monitoring which encompasses subjects and all aspects of the school, including leadership and management and accessibility. They are evaluating their own performance and recognising and addressing their own training needs. They know the questions which need to be asked and are increasingly holding the school to account. The chair of the governing body is able to act as the critical friend to the headteacher, providing support and a listening ear when difficult decisions have to be made.

The LEA is providing a satisfactory level of support through the work of various curriculum consultants and the school's link adviser. Their monitoring of the school's progress against the action plan is good. There are regular meetings between the headteacher and the schools link adviser. The involvement of a primary consultant leader has facilitated links to another school. The inclusion of the school in the Intensifying Support Programme during the next academic year has been planned with the intention of accelerating the existing pace of change.

Evaluation of Progress:

The school is making reasonable progress towards raising pupils' attainment and eliminating underachievement.

In relation to the action plan and the impact of the actions taken, broadly reasonable progress has been made in addressing the key tasks which relate to the school's underachievement.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors and the local education authority. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

PAULINE ROBINS
HM Inspector of Schools