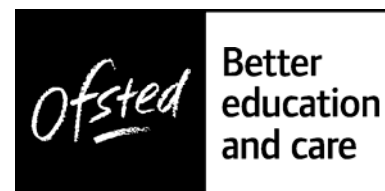


Preston Support Centre
Ringway House
Ringway
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 3HQ

Direct Tel 0800 389 5686
Direct Fax 01772 565353/565299

www.ofsted.gov.uk



15 July 2005

Ms H Maine
Headteacher
St Julian's CE VC Primary School
Wellow
Bath
BA2 8QS

Dear Ms Maine

Implementation of St Julian's CE VC Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 8 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 nine lessons or part lessons; attended a registration period and an assembly; 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. 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 and representatives of the governing body, the LEA and the diocese.

Standards of attainment by the end of Year 2 are below average. The proportions of pupils achieving the age expected results in the Key Stage 1 national tests in 2004 were well below average in reading, writing and mathematics, and compared with similar schools were well below average in reading and writing, and very low in mathematics. However, in the 2005 tests there was an improvement in reading and writing, while results in mathematics were broadly similar.

Standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 are below average. The proportions of pupils achieving the age expected results in the statutory Key Stage 2 tests in 2004 were below average in English, above average in mathematics and very high in science. Compared with schools with similar levels of attainment at the beginning of the Key Stage, results in English were in line with the average, well above average in mathematics and high in science. In the 2005 tests, results in all three subjects declined.

The progress made by the pupils in the lessons seen was good in both key stages. There is underachievement in a number of areas, particularly in Key Stage 1, due to weaknesses identified in the last inspection report, but generally the causes have been addressed and achievement is improving. Overall pupils had a good attitude to learning, and from the Foundation Stage onwards were developing effective habits and procedures. Independent learning is improving, and pupils responded well to activities led by teachers, to group work and to individual tasks.

The quality of teaching overall was good. All the lessons seen were at least satisfactory, five were good and two were very good. In each lesson there was a clear structure and a consistent set of procedures. Pupils were told what they were going to learn; in the best cases this was very effectively reviewed in the plenary session at the end of the lesson, and the pupils were involved in assessing their own learning. Relationships in all the lessons were very good, with the teachers' high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and application resulting in consistently good progress. Lessons were generally well planned, particularly in the medium term, although in some cases a lack of detailed planning for some elements of individual lessons inhibited progress. Starter activities were often well used to consolidate knowledge and understanding, or to set the context for the lessons. Activities in the main part of the lessons were appropriately matched to the differing needs of the pupils. Learning support assistants were often deployed very effectively, working with groups of pupils or even in one case with the whole class. Information and communication technology (ICT) was well used to enhance the presentation of work. In the reception class, the outside environment was well used to enhance learning.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were very good. Around the school they were sensible, and played in a mutually supportive way. They appreciated and used the various playing areas well. In five of the lessons, attitudes and behaviour were very good, and they were good in the other four. Pupils listened well and responded enthusiastically to the teachers' questions; they supported each other and concentrated on their tasks when working in small groups which were not actively supervised for short periods of time. The behaviour of the oldest pupils showed a marked improvement on that reported by the teachers and noted in the last inspection report.

Leadership and management overall are good. The leadership and management of the acting headteacher are excellent. Her evaluation of the requirements for

improvement on her appointment was clear and well focused. In less than one term she has provided guidance to the teaching staff to enable them to work more effectively in both management and teaching roles. This has been done by reviewing existing procedures, and dispensing with all that did not have a clear impact on learning. Clearer job descriptions, more effective delegation of appropriate responsibilities, and a very firm focus on learning, have resulted in a real improvement in the team work and the morale of staff, and have had a considerable impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher has rightly focused attention on the need for learning to be supported by effective target setting for each pupil, but at present the target setting process is not yet secure. The headteacher's own commitment to high standards of behaviour, and to the pupils' personal development is excellent. This was seen in her supervision of the pupils in the playground and around the school, and in a very good assembly, in which the pupils' achievements were celebrated, and their own involvement in the proceedings provided a splendid opportunity for personal development. The governors have a clearer understanding of the requirements and procedures for effective monitoring of the management of the school.

The action plan is good overall. It lays out clearly the actions required for improvement. Responsibilities are clear and timescales and evaluation processes well planned. Success criteria are provided, normally in the form of a wide range of desirable outcomes which in some cases could usefully be enhanced by reference to attainment targets.

The response of the LEA to the inspection findings was robust, and the statement of action and the subsequent support are good. In particular the appointment of the acting headteacher has provided the capacity to meet the required improvements. The LEA has also provided good support through strategic planning, school advisory work, and planning and finance for improvements in ICT provision and accommodation

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: Take action to rectify the weaknesses in the leadership and management of the Headteacher

Interim arrangements during the period prior to the resignation of the previous substantive headteacher were adequate. The subsequent appointment of a full time acting headteacher and the arrangements to appoint a substantive new headteacher from September 2005 have been effective.

Progress in this area for improvement is good.

2: Improve the knowledge and understanding of teaching in the Foundation Stage so that the needs of children are met and suitably planned for

A wide range of appropriate action, including the provision of support and resources, has been taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage. This has already had a considerable impact, with the clear capacity for further improvement.

Progress in this area for improvement is good.

3: Make greater use of the pupils' literacy and ICT skills to extend their learning and support other areas within the curriculum

Two teachers have taken responsibility for this area. Planning for the development of literacy to support other areas of the curriculum is good and is having a positive impact on standards. The teacher leading on this issue has a clear agenda for further developments and works well with, and is well supported by, the other class teachers. The provision of improved ICT resources has considerably improved the capacity for enhanced learning through the use of ICT across the curriculum. This is supported by a clear plan for improvement, which the teacher responsible is implementing well.

Progress in this area for improvement is good.

4: Review the inadequate accommodation

A thorough review of the accommodation has resulted in an acceptable plan within the constraints on the potential for a complete rebuild of parts of the school.

Progress in this area for improvement is reasonable.

5: Ensure that Governors fully meet their statutory responsibilities by including statutory targets and details on staff development in their annual report to parents

This has been done.

Progress in this area for improvement is good.

In summary, compared with the situation reported in the last inspection, there are improvements, some considerable, in: the quality of teaching and learning; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the leadership and management of the school. Consequently, good 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, the Education Director for Bath and North East Somerset and the Diocesan Director of Education for Bath and Wells. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

JOHN ENGLISH
Additional Inspector

cc: chair of governors
LEA
diocese