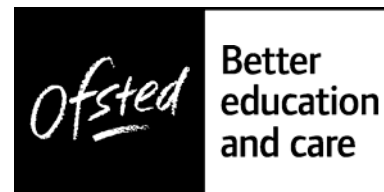


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Mr M Winter
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mr Winter

Implementation of East the Water Primary School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Mr A Watters HMI and Mr S Harford HMI, to your school on 4 and 5 May 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. 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.

The school has made reasonable progress since the last monitoring inspection and limited progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education, Arts and Libraries for Devon. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF EAST THE WATER PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 16 lessons or parts of lessons, three registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, the senior management team, the chair of governors, the school's new attached adviser and a school improvement officer. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the acting headteacher, the senior management team, the chair of the governing body and representatives from the LEA.

Following the outcome of the previous monitoring visit the governors agreed that the headteacher should have a period of compassionate leave. This was subsequently extended and from 21 February 2005 the headteacher has been absent on long-term sick leave. The governors in consultation with the LEA, appointed the school's assigned adviser as the acting headteacher, from 8 February 2005.

At the time of the previous inspection the school was at a critical point and was falling well short of its stated aims; this situation has improved. The acting headteacher, with the support of all staff and governors has arrested the school's decline and established a more secure basis for further improvement. Staff absence has reduced significantly, the pupils' behaviour is better and morale has improved. The outcomes of a recent parents' questionnaire indicate clearly that out of those who responded, confidence in the school has risen. While these are important features of school improvement and present a more confident outlook for the future, there is still much to do to improve the quality of education overall and in particular to lift the levels of pupils' attainment.

Standards remain too low and the pupils' progress in lessons and over time is still too slow. Only about half the pupils are achieving the standards which are expected for their ages; there is a legacy of low attainment and underachievement that is not yet being tackled sufficiently well, particularly in reading, writing, mathematics and science.

The pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning have improved considerably since the last monitoring inspection. They were good in five lessons, satisfactory in nine and unsatisfactory in two; there were no instances of poor behaviour. These proportions reflect a general improvement in the ethos of the school. Most of the pupils co-operate willingly with adults and each other; they worked with enthusiasm and wanted to learn. In some lessons, appropriate classroom routines and good work habits were established. Conversely, in the two lessons where the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory, a significant minority continued

speaking while the teacher instructed the class and the rules for answering questions were not sufficiently clear. Similarly the pupils lost concentration and became unsettled when they were expected to listen passively to the teacher for too long.

Around the school the pupils moved in an orderly manner with a good degree of care for one another; most played well together at break and lunchtime. They were pleased to meet and talk to visitors, and expressed their ideas and opinions about the changes in the school with reasonable confidence; the pupils' self-esteem has improved.

During this inspection the pupils' attendance was low and there were some discrepancies between attendance recorded in lessons and the school's analysis. However since the start of the academic year the rate of attendance has risen to 97.6 per cent which is well above the national average for primary schools. There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions since the beginning of the summer term 2005.

The quality of teaching and learning remains unsatisfactory overall. There are still too many teaching sessions that are impeding the pupils' progress and failing to tackle the underlying causes of the pupils' low attainment and underachievement. The staff work hard and are very committed to securing the school's improvement but much remains to be done to eliminate important weaknesses in teaching.

The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory in nine lessons and unsatisfactory in seven; in five of the satisfactory lessons relative strengths in the teaching only just outweighed the weaknesses. There has been no significant improvement in teaching since the previous inspection and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching sessions is far too high.

All teachers have achieved success in improving the pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to work. In the satisfactory lessons the teachers used questions effectively to probe the pupils' understanding, challenge their thinking and to encourage extended responses; teaching assistants were briefed well and provided sound support. In some lessons and in some of the pupils' books the teachers' marking was constructive and showed the pupils what they needed to do next in order to improve their work. On occasions teachers intervened sensitively during the pupils' group activities to reinforce important teaching points.

In the unsatisfactory and weaker lessons the pupils made very little measurable progress. Their work was not matched well enough to their different levels of prior attainment; as a result the pupils who were capable of achieving higher standards were not challenged sufficiently while other pupils often lacked the support they required to improve, particularly in writing and mathematics. In too many lessons learning objectives were confused with the pupils' activities, the teachers' subject knowledge was insecure and class routines were not established well enough. It

was often unclear what the pupils were expected to learn by the end of a lesson and sometimes the teachers' instructions and explanations caused confusion.

The teaching assistants were generally more actively involved in lessons than previously. In some lessons, they worked effectively with small groups of pupils whose tasks were matched closely to their learning needs. There was a sense of teamwork between the adults in many lessons; responsibility for managing the pupils' behaviour was shared. Elsewhere however use of the teaching assistants was not planned effectively and their participation in the lessons was limited.

Significant weaknesses have emerged in the quality of education for the youngest pupils in the Foundation Stage; much of the planning for these pupils is inadequate and failing to meet their specific learning needs across all areas of learning. There is far too little teaching of basic skills, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Many activities lack a clear purpose and offer very little to stimulate the pupils' interest and foster their enjoyment. The pupils are not given sufficient time to progress through sustained involvement and there is a general lack of clarity about the role of adults in supporting and improving the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. The current organisation of sessions makes it difficult for the adults to monitor the pupils' choices and to assess their progress against specific objectives.

Weaknesses still remain in curriculum planning. While some of the medium and short-term plans for English and mathematics provide a generally satisfactory framework too much of the teachers' planning does not accurately match activities to the pupils' varied needs. Day-to-day assessment is weak; it is not used well enough to amend and revise lesson plans to reflect whether or not the pupils have made progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge.

The acting headteacher has produced a sound evaluation of the school's progress, in particular to assess the impact of actions and encourage teachers to be more reflective about their work. The revised action plan provides a satisfactory framework for further improvement; success criteria for raising standards and improving teaching reflect a more robust and rigorous approach to improving the quality of education. The role of parents, the involvement of pupils and the provision of relevant training and development for teachers have been given greater priority.

The role of the senior management team has been revised; senior teachers have been given the responsibility to lead specific projects, such as improving the pupils' behaviour and attitudes, developing better links with parents and the community, improving the curriculum and raising standards. These are all important initiatives and some have already achieved success, for example achieving a more prominent role for parents and planning for the introduction of a school council for the pupils. The acting headteacher and the senior management team recognise that further work is required to strengthen their role by focusing more clearly on measuring the

impact of actions in relation to the pupils' attainment and their rates of progress, particularly in lessons.

There is not a sufficiently systematic and rigorous programme of monitoring and intervention to improve the quality of teaching; while a good deal of work has taken place to support teachers and the acting headteacher has identified some key weaknesses, these actions have not resulted in clear targets for improvement or a sense of urgency about when such improvements should be made. Similarly too little thought has been given to improving the school's management structure and there is a general lack of coherence about how some of the initiatives being introduced should be managed and co-ordinated.

The chair of governors has worked effectively and closely with the LEA to provide positive leadership during a period of some turbulence and upheaval; she has made important contributions to improving links with parents and the community, restoring confidence in the school and co-ordinating the work of various governors' committees. She has also played a prominent role in producing the school's revised action plan and drawing up the school's response to the previous inspection.

The LEA acted swiftly to stabilise the school's leadership and management. A revised statement of action and commentary show how the LEA expects to fulfil its responsibilities; a steering group comprising senior LEA officers has been established to monitor the school's progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of the LEA's actions. The school's new assigned adviser has been given a clear role in supporting the acting headteacher and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Regular reviews of progress are planned in order for the LEA to monitor the school's improvement. These are all positive developments.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: improve the leadership and management of the school

Reasonable progress has been made to address this key issue.

Key Issue 2: raise the standards in all subjects, but especially in English, mathematics and science

The progress made in addressing this key issue has been limited.

Key Issue 3: improve the teaching and learning

While limited progress has been made to improve the quality of teaching, and considerable weaknesses remain, teachers have been successful in promoting a more positive ethos, particularly in improving the pupils' attitudes to their learning, and progress in this aspect of the key issue has been reasonable.