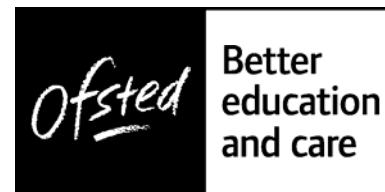


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Mrs A Higgs
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Higgs

Implementation of St George's Cathedral RC Primary School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Carmen Rodney HMI, Judith Rundle HMI and Jane Joyner HMI to your school on 5 and 6 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 second 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's action plan is good.

The LEA's statement of action is good.

The LEA's target date of September 2006 for the removal of special measures is realistic.

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

The school is permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Diocese of Southwark, the Director of Education

at CEA and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning at Southwark. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF ST GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL RC PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

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

During the visit 20 lessons or parts of lessons, four registration sessions and two assemblies were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors and the LEA adviser. 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 headteacher, the chair of the governing body and the link adviser from the LEA.

The school's action plan clearly identifies an appropriate range of action to address the areas for improvement. There is a clear and direct focus on raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school has sensibly grouped some of the areas for improvement with precise details of the phased actions to be taken with appropriate timescales. Success criteria are succinct, with quantifiable targets to measure progress and key personnel have been identified to lead each area for improvement. Suitable procedures for monitoring, evaluating and funding the plan have been established. The governing body has been given a prominent role in overseeing sections of the plan; for example, improving the accommodation. The timescales for each area are challenging; many of the deadlines are scheduled for completion in 2004 or by late autumn in 2005. Overall, the school action plan accords well with the LEA's statement of action.

The LEA has prepared a detailed commentary and statement of action. The commentary provides useful contextual information and a meticulous account of events before the section 10 inspection. There is a clear overview of the ensuing actions taken by the governors and officers to support the school across the broad range of its work. The LEA's statement of action includes a good range of suitable and helpful strategies to support and take the school forward during its time in special measures. The statement dovetails well with the school action plan and provides a sound basis for progress. The success criteria are precise and measurable. The procedures for monitoring are extensive and detailed as are the outline of resources required to address each area for improvement. The LEA has been instrumental in working closely with the Diocesan Board and the governing body to form a governing body monitoring group (GMBG). There has been a significant input of advice, support and training from the LEA, much of which the governors have used and valued.

Standards in lessons were broadly in line with national expectations in most lessons, although the quality in the presentation of the pupils' work was inconsistent. Progress in most lessons was reasonable and exceptionally good in several lessons as both boys and girls were stimulated by energetic teaching. Excellent progress was seen in the Year 5-6 science lesson and very good progress

in the literacy lessons in the reception class and in Years 4 and 4-5, and in the Year 5-6 mathematics lesson. The pupils in the Foundation Stage made consistently good progress, particularly in communication, language and literacy as a result of the consistent emphasis on modelling and repetition. The skilful use of talk made a significant contribution to developing the pupils' oracy skills. Where progress was less than satisfactory, it was related to weaknesses in the teaching.

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 18 lessons; it was excellent in one, very good in four and good in eight lessons. It was unsatisfactory or poor in two lessons. Highly effective teaching set high expectations of the pupils and deepened their knowledge and understanding. The pupils were continuously challenged and inspired to think for themselves through the use of modelling, practical activities, application of the taught skills, intensive use of open-ended questions and structured opportunities for them to explain their ideas. The teachers held the pupils' attention very well and showed good subject knowledge during discussion. They adopted an unobtrusive and sensitive approach when correcting the pupils' behaviour or communication skills. In these lessons, the more able pupils were given the opportunity to work independently. Work was suitably matched to the needs of all pupils with additional incentive for them to extend their work. The teaching assistants were effectively deployed in all lessons.

The pupils with special educational needs were suitably supported. Those at the early stage of learning English were fully integrated into all lessons. The teachers and assistants reinforced the pupils' learning by exploiting the wide range of their native languages during the teaching of key words and numeracy. This greatly helped the achievement of the pupils who were learning English. The pupils also confidently used up to four languages when responding to their names in a registration.

In lessons that were satisfactory overall, the pace of learning was slower. Plans did not reflect the wide ability range of the pupils and the learning objectives were outlined as tasks. Occasionally, the teachers did not exercise sufficient classroom management and organisational skills to ensure that the pupils were working with concentration and understanding. While a concluding summary session was often used, the pupils were not given sufficient opportunities to explain what they had learnt. The less than satisfactory lessons included weak management skills, which led to inattention and poor behaviour which the teachers ignored. Relationships with the pupils were uneasy; consequently, they did not engage with the teacher's instructions or listen with concentration. Pace was also slow.

The school is introducing optional tests but the analysis of the data they provide is at an early stage of development. Individual target setting is an emerging and positive feature in all areas of the curriculum. Marking was mostly diagnostic with some reference to the learning objectives. However, good quality marking has lapsed in a few classes where there have been past difficulties with staffing.

With the exception of two lessons, the pupils' attitudes to learning were sound or better; they were good or better in over two thirds of lessons. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour, however, were unsatisfactory in one lesson and barely satisfactory in another. Behaviour beyond the classroom was good and, overall, the pupils' positive attitudes to learning have continued to be a strong feature of the school. They displayed good listening skills when the teaching was effective and sustained their interest. In contrast, however, they quickly lost interest and became unco-operative when the teaching was uninteresting, the teachers failed to involve them or when expectations of behaviour and learning were not explicit.

The quality of the pupils' learning was satisfactory or better in most lessons; it was excellent in one, good or better in 15 and unsatisfactory or poor in two. In lessons where the pupils learnt well, they displayed assured, independent learning habits and confidence in their ability to articulate their ideas and apply the taught skills accurately. They drew well on their prior learning and this had a good effect on their progress. They were not daunted when their answers were incorrect; instead they were prepared to build on their skills. Because they knew their targets, most could explain what they needed to do to reach a higher level. They made less progress when the weaknesses in teaching failed to match their learning needs.

The attendance for the spring term, 92 per cent, remains below the average for primary schools. The school's data showed considerable variation in particular classes where there was a steep decline in attendance over a period of two weeks. The school has wisely taken swift action to improve the high level of unauthorised absence. The regular newsletter to parents has ensured that they are made aware of the adverse impact that prolonged absence has on improving their children's progress. Punctuality was generally good. There have been five fixed-term exclusions this term.

The registration time was used well to provide a positive start to the day. The pupils were able to share good news and develop constructive relationships and working habits. Classrooms are tidy with stimulating displays of pupils' work and other information that value and reinforce diversity and encourage learning. The assemblies were a pivotal point for the pupils and visiting parents that enabled them to identify with the school as a special community as they celebrated Ascension and the pupils' personal achievements. They provided very good opportunities for the pupils to take part in musical renditions, readings and prayers. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally good.

The headteacher has continued to provide thoughtful and measured support for the school and is committed to its improvement. She has rightly worked closely with the LEA and governors to re-structure the senior management team: senior staff are expected to have strategic responsibilities. The headteacher is ably assisted by the acting deputy headteacher who, appropriately, plays a key role in supporting staff and leading and developing aspects of the curriculum. Although there remain difficulties with staff recruitment and retention, appropriate action has been taken to fill vacancies. The school's self evaluation of its work is strong; teaching and

learning are monitored rigorously and there is a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses, with targeted support for teachers.

The governors' contribution to the strategic and day-to-day management of the school has increased significantly. They are increasingly holding the school to account through regular meetings with staff and by asking pertinent and probing questions. The school's budget is monitored regularly to ensure that there are no shortfalls.

The LEA has continued to provide consistently good advisory support for the school; the impact of this is evident in the work of the co-ordinators. The LEA has assisted the school analyse and interpret assessment data and monitor teaching and learning.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: raise the quality of teaching and make more effective use of assessment information

This area for improvement is reported in detail above. Although there is still some variability, this is localised and overall, the quality of the teaching has been strengthened. Developments in monitoring, target setting and feedback have enabled the senior and middle managers to evaluate how best to target support.

Progress is good.

2: ensure that children make effective progress during their time in the nursery and reception years

Provision has continued to improve in the Foundation Stage. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of future developments and identified appropriate priorities. She has visited other nurseries to observe good practice and has increased the focus on outdoor play as a result. Resources have been increased and are now used more creatively. Whole-team planning has improved the consistency of teaching and learning throughout the Foundation Stage.

Progress is good.

3: ensure that pupils at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs are given enough support

There has been improved contact with the LEA's officer with responsibility for the pupils who have English as an additional language and the school library services. The advisory teacher has worked closely with the school to plan an induction programme for implementation from the new academic year and to devise an assessment grid which is being trialled with three age groups. This has helped with the early identification and planned support for individual pupils. There has been

an increase of appropriate resources to support learning including for each classroom and the school library. There are clear and appropriate priorities identified for future developments across the school.

There has been more limited progress in the provision for pupils who have special educational needs even though there has been good support from the LEA. Individual education plans are completed with reviews held each term to set appropriate targets. The school now maintains formal records of the contacts with parents of pupils who have special educational needs.

Progress is reasonable.

4: raise standards of achievement, particularly in science

Whole-school training has been delivered in science on improving the balance of skills and knowledge based teaching, the use of planning and the use of assessment to raise attainment. National guidance on planning has been used consistently across the school and some staff make effective use of the related teaching framework. In science, most of the pupils are working at age-related expectations. While, overall, science resources have been increased to support investigative experiments, the continued absence of the science co-ordinator has delayed the implementation of some elements of the action plan.

Progress is reasonable.

5: focus leadership and management efforts on raising standards and supporting pupils' learning

This has been reported in detail above. The school has made reasonably good progress in strengthening the role of leadership and management and has continued to hold middle managers and teachers to account through consistent and accurate monitoring of teaching and learning. The wide range of strategies used to support the pupils' learning is beginning to raise standards.

Progress is good.

6: remedy the shortcomings in the school accommodation

Security has increased at the main entrance to the school and in the nursery. The playground has been improved with new surfacing and stimulating floor markings. The reorganisation and refurbishment of spaces in the school are expected to create a further classroom for the start of the new academic year. Discussions with the LEA and diocese are continuing on the five year development plan for the building.

Progress is reasonable.