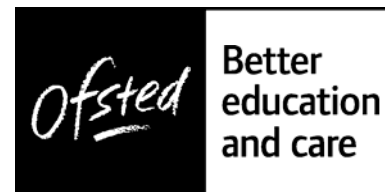


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23 May 2005

Mr A Edkins  
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Dear Mr Edkins

### **Implementation of Harrop Fold School's Action Plan**

Following the visit of Mrs J Jones HMI, Mr M Cladingbowl HMI, Ms C Kirby HMI, and Mrs S Morris-King HMI to your school on 16 and 17 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 seventh 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 good progress since the last monitoring inspection and reasonable progress overall since being subject to special measures.

The school is permitted to appoint a newly qualified teacher in each of four subject areas: English, physical education, science, and information and communication technology (ICT).

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 and Leisure for Salford. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid  
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF HARROP FOLD SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN**

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

During the visit, 49 lessons or parts of lessons, two registration sessions and two assemblies were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, several senior and middle managers, two teachers who have responsibility for developing cross-curricular ICT, the chair of governors, parent governors, the school-based police officer, a local minister, the chair of the Education Action Zone (EAZ), the project manager from the School Improvement Partnership Board (SIPB), and a representative from the LEA. 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, a deputy headteacher, the vice chair of governors, the project manager from the SIPB, and two representatives from the LEA.

The quality of teaching has improved; it was good in 12 lessons, satisfactory in 25, and unsatisfactory in 12. A contributory factor has been the work on identifying the characteristics of good teaching; most lessons incorporated a number of these. In the best lessons, learning objectives were shared with the pupils in language they could understand, and resources were well matched to the pupils' needs. The use of paired and group work gave opportunities for collaboration; the sharing of ideas actively engaged the pupils in their learning. Another feature of these lessons was the well-planned activities that incorporated a range of learning styles. The teaching assistants were used effectively to support the learning of specific groups of pupils.

There was a fine balance of strengths and weaknesses in some of the satisfactory lessons. Too often, a whole-class approach to the lesson resulted in insufficient challenge to the more-able pupils, some of whom finished the tasks early and had to wait while others caught up. Slippage in the timing of activities led to rushed closing plenary sessions and teachers were unable to gain an accurate view of the extent to which the learning objectives had been met. Prolonged periods of teachers talking often led to disengagement from learning; the pupils became quietly bored.

In the unsatisfactory lessons, the teachers were insufficiently assertive in managing misbehaviour; this slowed the pace of the lesson. Routines were not well established and, overall, the teachers' expectations were too low. The use of mundane tasks failed to capture and hold the interest of some pupils. Questioning was at times cursory: the teachers too readily accepted one-word answers and did not probe sufficiently to extend the pupils' thinking. The quieter pupils did not proffer answers and the more vocal pupils dominated the discussion.

The quality of learning has improved and more closely matches the quality of teaching. The pupils' progress was good in ten lessons, satisfactory in 25, and unsatisfactory in 14. Weak literacy and oracy skills continue to be a barrier to the

pupils' learning across the curriculum. While some pupils are beginning to respond well to the focus on independent learning, a significant number do not have the skills to sustain the concentration required to get the most from this learning style.

The pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons have improved since the previous monitoring inspection. They were satisfactory or better in 41 lessons, including 18 in which they were good and five very good. They were unsatisfactory in seven lessons and poor in one. Many of the pupils were enthusiastic and were keen to answer the teachers' questions. They showed a pride in their written work; some of the pupils' books were very well presented. The pupils co-operated well with each other and were polite and respectful to the teachers. In most lessons, the ethos was good; there was a positive atmosphere and a clear focus on learning. In a very few lessons, pupils were inattentive and caused disruption. Sometimes, the immature attitudes of a small group of pupils spoiled the learning of the majority; this was not always challenged by staff.

The pupils' behaviour and movement around the school's two sites have improved and are satisfactory. The pupils were polite to visitors and responded well to the staff. The beginning and end of the day were orderly, supervised effectively through a highly visible level of staffing. At lunchtime, the pupils' behaviour in the dining rooms and the internet café was good.

Assemblies on each of the sites promoted a sense of community and stressed the importance of adopting positive attitudes to learning. As well as providing a good start to the day, both assemblies gave the pupils and staff a moving and poignant opportunity to mark the tragic death of a Year 9 pupil ten days earlier.

Attendance for the spring term 2005 was 88.9 per cent, a marked improvement from the autumn term, when attendance was 85.9 per cent. During the monitoring visit, however, attendance in lessons varied widely and was sometimes very low.

The school has produced a brief draft policy for special educational needs provision. However, this has not been ratified by the governing body, thereby not meeting statutory requirements. Appropriately, recent attention has been paid to the needs of other vulnerable groups of pupils. These have been identified and the school is taking some initial action to ensure that these pupils are fully included in the school.

The provision for the pupils who have special educational needs has been plagued by staffing difficulties. Wisely, the school has decided to restructure the staffing of this area. The plans to reorganise and expand the team of teaching assistants to provide leadership and more effective support for the pupils are sensible. Senior staff are aware of the need to support and monitor closely the proposed teaching of small groups by teaching assistants. The school has carefully considered the future role of all aspects of learning support provision and the way in which it can be made more

coherent. Importantly, in order to provide vulnerable or challenging pupils with greater stability on transition, the school intends to create two Year 7 classes each of which will receive the majority of their teaching from one teacher. Appropriate attention has been paid to the structure of the Key Stage 4 curriculum; a good range of option choices is available. The improvements in the curriculum and learning support planned for September have the potential to meet the needs of the school's range of learners effectively.

Earlier weaknesses in the arrangements for governance have been addressed through a new committee structure and suitable terms of reference. Reflecting good practice, a set of performance indicators for the work of each committee is being devised. Governors now receive enough information about the school's performance to enable them to monitor the school's progress in bringing about improvement. A budget-deficit recovery plan has been agreed with the LEA, and the governors have set a balanced in-year budget for 2005-06. The governing body is well led; the chair of governors has a sound grasp of the challenges and opportunities facing the school. Rightly, he has concerns about the extended delay in agreeing the final arrangements for the proposed private finance initiative; the current accommodation is poor at the Longshaw site and is unsatisfactory overall.

Other aspects of leadership and management are discussed under Priority Area 3.

The LEA has continued to support the school on a number of fronts, the educational psychology service, the education welfare service and the Secondary Strategy. Increasingly, the school has been in the position to specify exactly what support it requires and the LEA has responded positively. In particular, the LEA has given good support in addressing the concerns raised at the last monitoring visit about the quality of provision in ICT. The role of the city learning centre has been instrumental in terms of technical support and training for staff. Moreover, the contribution of £65,000 from the DfES has enabled the school to equip an internet café, which houses a suite of 28 computers and is appreciated by the pupils.

The senior school improvement officer has worked in conjunction with the headteacher, focusing through a bespoke programme upon the roles and effectiveness of senior and middle managers. She provided a useful summary of the LEA's support but, in evaluating the effectiveness of its actions, the LEA should clearly separate the impact from the success criteria. More generally, the records of visits of LEA personnel are of variable quality.

Overall, the effectiveness of the LEA's support for the day-to-day work of the school has been satisfactory. There is, however, uncertainty surrounding the building of a new school on the Hilton site, originally proposed for 2007. While the LEA has increased the school's funding in lieu of the additional costs associated with its split

site, the lack of clarity about the building proposals is in danger of hampering the school's medium-term strategic planning.

## **Action taken to address the priority areas**

### **Priority Area 1: improve the pupils' behaviour, attitudes and attendance**

The school has continued its well-focused drive to improve the pupils' attitudes and behaviour, and to enable the staff to manage better the pupils' learning and their behaviour. The senior staff who are responsible for leading this priority area have a clear understanding of the remaining issues, particularly the pivotal role that good teaching and learning plays in the development of good attitudes, behaviour and attendance. The policy on behaviour management is suitable, and has recently been ratified by the governing body. Almost all of the pupils responded well in lessons where the staff used the strategies advocated in the policy, such as consistent expectations, a non-confrontational approach, and positive language. However, some staff were inconsistent in managing the pupils' behaviour or were insufficiently assertive, leading to confusion or confrontation which disrupted the flow of learning.

Crucially, senior staff have focused their efforts on the development of the roles of the heads of year and the form tutors, recognising the need to ensure that tutors have a clear overview of the progress of the pupils in their form. The tutors have recently been provided with data on the pupils, including identification of any underachievement. This helped guide their conversations with pupils and their parents in a target-setting day.

The school's approach to minimising exclusion has been successful. Thirty-six pupils were excluded during the autumn and spring terms, compared with 382 pupils during 2003-04. No pupil has been permanently excluded during this academic year. The school views exclusion as a very serious sanction; it excludes pupils for a period of 15 days or more, during which time they attend a pupil referral unit. Only two pupils have been excluded more than once since the introduction of this strategy. The school has found the governors' rigorous approach to this issue valuable. The pupils' gradual reintegration to lessons following exclusion is sensible. A few pupils continue to cause regular disruption in lessons. Although the school is taking a range of appropriate actions to address this problem, there is a very small core of pupils for which they have yet to be effective.

The headteacher has proposed that the school admits some permanently excluded pupils on a part-time basis and with appropriate adult support. There is, however, a lack of clarity about the LEA's strategy for the reintegration of permanently excluded pupils into schools across the area.

Progress on this priority area is good.

## **Priority Area 2: improve the quality of teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last monitoring visit. A rigorous programme of lesson observations has given the school an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning, and honest feedback has been provided for the teachers. There is an appropriate balance between support through professional development and robust challenge to persistently unsatisfactory teaching. The school is now well placed to further increase the proportion of good teaching.

The school has rightly shifted the focus to what the pupils will learn. Lesson plans conform to a common format and most have clearly stated learning objectives; they routinely identify activities the pupils and teachers will undertake but do not focus enough on what and how the pupils will learn. Some of the plans do not take sufficiently into account the different learning needs of individual pupils. Many pupils do not have the skills to study independently or take responsibility for their own learning.

A range of strategies to improve the quality of ICT provision is now established. Considerable investment in equipment and training for the use of ICT across the curriculum is beginning to have an impact in some lessons but, as a strategy to improve the quality of learning, this work is in the early stages.

Progress on this priority area is reasonable.

## **Priority Area 3: improve leadership and management**

Since the last monitoring visit in January, there has been significant progress in building improved capacity for effective leadership and management at all levels within the school. This work has been strongly led by the headteacher, whose well-judged prioritisation of the areas for development has been crucial in securing improvement.

A principal focus at senior levels has been to improve the quality of evaluative writing. The headteacher firstly sought to extend his own skills in this area, drawing on current research and practice, before guiding the work of the nine senior staff. The headteacher critically appraised their weekly "accountability sheets". Over a period of a few weeks, the quality of these documents has risen substantially, reflecting an improved understanding of the effectiveness of actions taken within each senior manager's area of responsibility. At the same time, the headteacher identified key questions that should be answered to inform the school's self-evaluation of progress on each priority area since the last monitoring visit. The resulting document was good: overall, the headteacher and senior staff have a well-informed grasp of the quality of provision and the impact of actions taken. A number of next steps have also been identified. Some, however, are reactive stand-alone tasks rather than actions underpinned by a coherent and strategic approach that builds upon what has been gained. As the school begins to consider

the development of a new improvement plan to guide its work, there will be a need to explore how to integrate the cycle of monitoring, evaluation and review.

The separate roles and responsibilities of the six assistant headteachers have been clarified and are better understood. Moreover, both individually and collectively, they have started to demonstrate clearer leadership. They produced, and shared with the school's staff on a training day, a matrix that identifies the expected contributions of heads of department, subject teachers, heads of year, form tutors and the pupils to each of their areas of responsibility; for example, on the use of data. This has the potential to inform the work of departments and year teams, supported and challenged through a clearer agenda for line management.

The middle managers have benefited from a programme of training provided by the LEA. Coupled with this has been an increased expectation that they should be accountable for the quality of provision within their areas. While the quality of middle leadership and management remains variable, it is now largely satisfactory; some is good. Work in developing the roles of heads of year and form tutors in academic monitoring and tracking of the pupils' progress is in the early stages. Nevertheless some important foundations have been laid.

Progress on this priority area is good.

#### **Priority Area 4: improve relationships with parents, carers and the community (a new priority area)**

A fall in the number of written complaints from parents, from 37 in September 2004 to only three in April 2005, and a similarly striking reduction in the number of reported incidents of bullying from 22 to two in the same period, reflect a marked improvement in relationships throughout the school, and in the quality and frequency of communications between the school, parents and the local community. Moreover, parents' attendance at consultation and review meetings has risen during the course of this school year.

The headteacher has taken particular care to seek out, and act upon, the views of parents and has been pivotal in restoring parental confidence in the school. A very small but vociferous number of parents remain concerned about events that occurred before, and shortly after, the judgment that made the school subject to special measures. However, representatives of the majority of parents are very positive about the improvements made to the school since September 2004. In particular, they value the school's policy of responding to residual parental and other concerns in a frank, robust and timely manner.

Good links have been established with partner primary schools, and the EAZ has been instrumental in building trust and extending co-operation. Overall, these improvements have resulted in a marked rise in the number of pupils seeking a place at the school from 1 September 2005.

Progress on this priority area is good.

## **Priority Area 5: raise attainment and achievement**

The school has worked hard to improve the use of assessment data. In particular, a booklet of descriptors for each National Curriculum sub-level has been developed. Copies are available in each classroom, and are a useful aid for assessing current levels of performance and what needs to be done to achieve a higher level. Monitoring records show that the pupils are aware of this information. In April, the school held a review day when the form tutors had individual discussions with the pupils and their parents, informed by the pupils' end-of-key-stage targets and data on their performance and progress. The tutors helped the pupils to identify areas of strength and weakness and to set targets to guide their future work. However, while generally offering sound advice, the targets lacked specific-subject guidance. Appropriately, the data on the pupils' progress and targets is also noted on their records of achievement (RoAs) and in their individual progress files. The teachers are provided with useful guidance on completing RoAs. The school might consider how the subject targets written on the pupils' RoAs might inform the targets drawn up at the review meeting.

Although the school has developed sound systems for collecting data, setting targets and tracking progress, more needs to be done to improve the use of data in teaching and learning. The school's planned focus upon assessment to promote learning is timely. At present, however, there are no whole-school policies on assessment. Although some teachers use the pupils' performance in tests to identify areas for revision for example, rigorous analysis of the pupils' examination and test scripts is not routinely used to inform curricular planning. While moderation of coursework is a common feature at GCSE, practice is inconsistent with regard to teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3.

Progress on this priority area is reasonable.