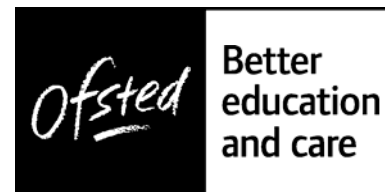


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18 May 2005

Mrs G Barratt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Barratt

Implementation of Micklehurst All Saints CE Primary School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Ms C Kirby HMI to your school on 9 and 10 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 sixth 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.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Chief Education Officer for Tameside and the Diocese of Chester. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF MICKLEHURST ALL SAINTS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

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

During the visit 11 lessons or parts of lessons, one registration session and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, the chair of governors and representatives 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, the deputy headteacher, the chair of the governing body, a representative from the diocese and representatives from the LEA.

At Key Stage 1 standards have begun to rise from a low base. Recent assessments showed two thirds of Year 2 pupils to be at or above the national expectations in reading and writing which represents significant progress since the last monitoring visit, when this figure was a quarter. The pupils' progress overall has improved due to consistently better teaching and better management of the mixed age group in which they are taught; consequently they are now very close to the levels expected.

At Key Stage 2 challenging targets for the 2005 national tests have been set, but these must be viewed with some caution; a high level of pupil mobility has reduced the size of the Year 6 cohort by approximately 20 per cent since September. The remaining Year 6 pupils are expected to meet their attainment targets based on Fischer Family Trust data.

In lessons, most higher-attaining pupils reached the standard expected for their ages, but many other pupils produced work that was below the expected standard. In some cases, this was attributable to weaknesses in their literacy skills and an inability to sustain concentration in tasks which required independent learning.

The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring visit. Teaching was very good in two lessons, good in three, satisfactory in five and unsatisfactory in one lesson. One factor responsible for improvement is the work staff have done to identify the characteristics of good teaching and to make sure that lessons incorporate these. Another factor has been a rigorous lesson observation programme with honest feedback combined with appropriate support to develop areas of weakness. A third factor has been the significant changes in staffing since the last monitoring visit; two established teachers have left the school and two temporary members of staff have taken over their teaching commitments. In the best lessons learning objectives were shared with the pupils in language they could understand. Good use of assessment for learning had enabled teachers to plan

activities which were accurately matched to ability groups; this helped ensure pupils remained engaged with their work. Another feature of these lessons was the variety of well planned, and often imaginative activities, which captured and sustained the pupils' interest. Teaching assistants were used well to support specific groups of pupils and this helped them to learn. Consistently good teaching in Year 3 is helping to accelerate progress and eliminate residual underachievement which resulted from weak teaching in Key Stage 1.

In some of the satisfactory lessons the teacher was not sufficiently assertive in ensuring pupils working independently remained on task; the attention of some pupils drifted away from their work and this slowed the pace of their learning. Where the tasks were repetitive and offered little challenge, the more able pupils became quietly bored and the pace of their learning slowed.

The unsatisfactory teaching arose from inadequacies in lesson planning, poor time management and too much time explaining what the pupils would do rather than allowing them to actively engage in the work; consequently learning was limited.

The quality of learning lagged behind the quality of teaching. Progress was good in five lessons, satisfactory in four and unsatisfactory in two lessons. The poor literacy skills of some pupils continue to be a barrier to their learning across the curriculum; although well targeted intervention strategies are working to improve skills in speaking and writing. Whilst most pupils are beginning to respond well to the focus on independent learning some do not have the skills to sustain the concentration required to get the most from this approach.

The curriculum offered by the school is sufficiently broad to meet statutory requirements; the timetable is carefully planned to give an appropriate balance to both the core and the wider curriculum.

The headteacher's persistence in tackling unsatisfactory performance has led to the resignation of two staff since the last monitoring visit; the impact on the quality of teaching has been significant. The headteacher is now leading work on school improvement with vigour and rapid progress is evident following a period of inertia. Staff morale is good and a team approach is evolving.

Improvements in the quality of teaching, a greater focus on learning, the use of assessment for learning and targeted strategies to raise attainment are beginning to have a measurable impact on standards.

The current senior leadership team has the capacity to drive further improvement, building on recent work and curriculum co-ordinators are rising well to the challenge of increased accountability for their areas of responsibility.

The headteacher's recent self-evaluation of the school's progress on the key issues within the action plan includes a statement of what the school needs to do to secure further improvement. This section does not always identify specific strategies or indicate timescales to address the remaining areas of weakness. Decisions around important areas of the school's work, for example, the longer-term management and development of the information and communication technology curriculum and action plans for foundation subjects are not being made with sufficient urgency.

The governing body is committed to the school and determined to see it improve. Following training provided by the LEA, governors are more rigorous in holding the school to account for the progress of the action plan; for example, in requesting reports on the work of specific co-ordinators.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons were never less than satisfactory and were good or better in seven lessons. Teaching strategies which reduce the amount of time pupils spend sitting passively have improved levels of concentration in class. The pupils generally settle quickly to their work. The recently appointed temporary teachers have made good progress in establishing appropriate expectations. The pupils understood and followed the appropriate classroom routines. They were clear about sanctions and rewards and responded well to praise.

Around school the pupils' behaviour is good. The school values the pupils' achievements and individual successes are displayed prominently around the school. Attractive displays in classrooms and corridors create a stimulating environment in which to learn. Assembly was an uplifting experience which united the whole school community and set the right tone for the day. Recently re-established links with the local church contribute to the Christian ethos of the school.

Attendance figures have risen since the time of the last monitoring visit and at 95 per cent are broadly in line with national figures; this reflects the school's more robust challenge to poor attendance. Unauthorised absence at 1.5 per cent is well above the national figure. There have been four fixed term exclusions for a total of five days so far this school year, a significant reduction on the figure of nine for a period of 36 days in 2003-4.

The LEA continues to provide a range of consultancy to support school improvement, planned in consultation with the headteacher and has produced a well considered evaluation of the school's progress.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: raise attainment in English, mathematics and science

The use of assessment for learning to inform lesson planning and to target learning support has begun to raise standards particularly in English and mathematics. Work on a skills-based approach to science teaching is at an early stage of development.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 2: improve the quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The proportion of teaching that is satisfactory or better has risen to 91 per cent and that which is good or better is 45 per cent. Changes to staffing and a more robust lesson observation programme have contributed to a reduction in the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.

Progress is good.

Key Issue 3: develop a whole school approach to tackling the poor behaviour of a large minority of the pupils

Standards of behaviour have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. High expectations and clearly understood classroom routines are now common practice in most lessons. Pupils have generally responded well to taking increased responsibility for their learning.

Progress is good.

Key Issue 4: improve the quality and range of what is taught in the curriculum

The school provides a balanced curriculum. Progress has been made in the quality of teaching and learning in literacy and mathematics. Assessment data shows that this improvement has begun to impact on standards. Curriculum development in the foundation subjects has some way to go.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 5: improve provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

A range of opportunities are provided for personal and social development. A whole school assembly held weekly at the local church provides opportunity for the pupils' spiritual development. Arrangements for the pupils' cultural development are less secure.

Progress is reasonable.

Key Issue 6: improve provision for pupils with special educational needs

This key issue was not addressed on this monitoring inspection.

Key Issue 7: take steps to secure the welfare of pupils

The care and support for pupils are good. Recent actions have improved the provision in this area. The school provides a safe and welcoming environment.

Progress is good.

Key Issue 8: put in place regular procedures to assess the school's performance, the curriculum and the effectiveness of teachers

Procedures for tracking the pupils' progress in literacy and mathematics are secure. The school is using this progress data to target strategies intended to raise attainment and has begun to evaluate the impact of these strategies. However, the monitoring and evaluation of quality of the school's provision in the foundation subjects is under-developed.

Progress is reasonable.