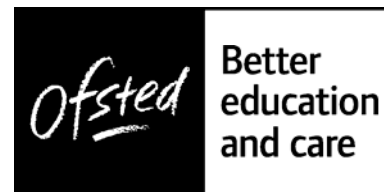


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4 July 2005

Mrs R Waterhouse
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Waterhouse

Implementation of St Meriadoc CE School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Mrs P Robins HMI and Mrs A Johns, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 June 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 third 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 Secretary for Education for Cornwall and the Diocesan Director of Education for Truro. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF ST MERIADOC CE SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

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

During the visit 14 lessons or parts of lessons, two registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors and selected members of staff. 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, a representative from the LEA, and a representative from the diocese.

Since the last monitoring visit an acting headteacher, appointed by the LEA, has taken up her post. She is being mentored by the headteacher of a neighbouring school who was previously the acting headteacher at St Meriadoc. The mentor has a wealth of experience of working in this community and with Cornwall LEA. The school has been successfully reassessed for the Investors in People Award this term.

Although standards remain too low, evidence from lessons show that the pupils' rate of progress is increasing and the gap between their attainment and what they should achieve is closing. A greater proportion of the pupils are working close to, or at, levels expected for their age. Informative training and support, including that from the LEA's Intensifying Support Programme (ISP), has ensured that staff have higher expectations of what the pupils can achieve. More effective tracking of the pupils' progress is in place and the teachers have a greater understanding of what represents sufficient progress. A regular programme of monitoring and evaluation provides helpful feedback to teachers which is beginning to have an impact on pupils' attainment. The learning environment, such as the 'working walls', encourages the pupils to achieve well.

The school has developed a useful bank of assessment data and has already identified particular areas of underachievement and the actions required to bring about further improvement. Pupils in Year 6 are grouped in sets for English and mathematics, which has ensured that the more able pupils have been appropriately challenged. In most lessons pupils were involved in self-assessment and knew what they needed to do to improve.

The quality of teaching and learning was never less than satisfactory and in one lesson was excellent. In three lessons it was very good and in two it was good. In general the quality of the learning reflected that of the teaching. This shows an improving picture since the previous visit. There is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching and the proportion of the teaching which is good has increased.

In the best lessons, there was a prompt, well defined start and the lesson moved forward at a brisk pace. The teachers had high expectations and used very good questioning techniques to extend the pupils knowledge and confirm their understanding. The teachers had good subject knowledge and were confident and clear in their exposition. They used a wide range of differing teaching strategies to hold the pupils attention and abounded with enthusiasm.

In the weaker lessons, the delivery was often mundane with overlong explanations which put a strain on the pupils' powers of attention. Tasks were not well matched to meet the needs of all pupils and in some instances were overly challenging.

There has been significant improvement and development in the teachers' planning. Medium-term plans are comprehensive and short-term planning meets the needs of the teachers individual teaching styles, though written to a common format. This improvement has been achieved as the result of a carefully structured five-week rolling programme of coaching and monitoring, undertaken by the deputy headteacher and ISP consultant. The teachers are now working in teams to write their plans. This has eased the burden of extensive planning and encouraged them to engage in professional dialogue. By careful timetabling, the acting headteacher has organised for next year, that each team of teachers will have a common, non-contact, half day each week to plan together with the deputy headteacher.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory in six lessons, good in three lessons and very good in five. The teachers are positive in their dealings with the pupils and as a result the pupils respond positively. The pupils are developing good work habits in Years 4, 5 and 6 but still show signs of immaturity and inattention in Year 3. There are very good relationships between the staff and the pupils and between the pupils themselves.

Around the school the pupils' behaviour is very good. They are supportive of each other and exceptionally polite and helpful to visitors. They are confident in their approach and in asking questions, without becoming overly familiar.

The acting headteacher is very positive and has already moved the school forward. She has brought fun and laughter to the school. She has the confidence of her staff and of the governing body. The senior management team recognise that there are still issues which need to be addressed, including the consistency of marking and the quality of teaching assistant support. However, they are in the process of integrating the post-inspection action plan into a whole-school improvement plan. The implication of this is that removal of special measures is no longer seen as an end in itself but is one step in a wider vision for the future. As from next year the deputy headteacher will no longer have a class teaching commitment. This will enable her to work across the school in her new role as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator and also to support teachers further with their planning, and work with specific groups of pupils in the bid to raise standards. The subject leaders have been empowered to take responsibility for their subject areas. They feel confident in their own capabilities and are monitoring the pupils'

progress and the quality of teaching through various means, including work scrutiny and moderation.

The governing body has come to terms with the school being placed in special measures and recognises the issues which were raised in the original inspection report. They are monitoring subject areas in a systematic way and are proactive in making visits to liaise with subject leaders. Good relationships have developed between the staff and governors which have been valuable in enabling open discussions to take place. At each meeting of the full governing body, there are standing items to update the governors on the action plan and to receive feedback from monitoring visits. The information they receive, in the form of reports from the headteacher, is focused and keeps them abreast of developments. They now know the questions which need to be asked if they are to challenge the headteacher and her staff in an appropriate manner.

Although there has been a change of school adviser, the support offered to the school remains secure. The LEA has in place a comprehensive programme of support, which includes the personnel department working with the school to resolve some sensitive staffing issues. The ISP consultant continues to play a pivotal role in supporting the school, particularly in her work with the deputy headteacher in developing teachers' planning. The LEA adviser has, appropriately, observed lessons jointly with the headteacher in order to moderate their judgements. These lesson observations agree with the findings of HMI.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: rectify weaknesses in the leadership and management

The new acting headteacher has maintained the pace of change. Despite the difficult circumstances of recent months the leadership and management of the school have gone from strength to strength.

Progress is good.

2: raise overall standards of attainment

Progress is reasonable.

3: improve the quality of teaching and learning

Progress is reasonable

4: review the provision for special educational needs

As from September, the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator will be taken on by the deputy headteacher. This is seen as a positive move and will link well with her responsibility for assessment, enabling her to co-ordinate accurate

target setting and the coordination of individual education plans. The process for monitoring special educational needs is now in place and the deputy headteacher will be in a good position to develop and embed this. However, there are training needs for the new co-ordinator which need to be recognised by the LEA.

Progress is reasonable.

5: ensure the promotion of equal opportunity and the full inclusion of all pupils

Joint planning and close monitoring ensure that the learning experience of all children is equitable. There is still some setting in the upper year groups but this is appropriate to the needs of individual pupils.

Progress is reasonable.

6: ensure that multi-cultural development is included in the provision for personal development

Attractive displays around the school indicate that much work has taken place to broaden the pupils' multi-cultural awareness and understanding. Teachers have begun to identify opportunities in the curriculum where this area can be developed. In Year 6 extensive discussion and debate on 'challenging stereotypes' has deepened the pupils' knowledge and empathy with others. This was strengthened during the residential visit to London. Permanent images, such as a multi-cultural cross located at the school entrance and the Year 3 African mural, promote positive attitudes. Visits to the school have included a Bangra dance group from the neighbouring secondary school and a Jaipur brass band. Both promoted a high level of interest, enjoyment and appreciation from the pupils.

Progress is good.

7: improve the level of parents' satisfaction and establish more proactive links with the school

The links with parents continue to develop well, with regular meetings, workshops, and informative newsletters in addition to other events. The parents responded enthusiastically to events such as the school's 20th birthday celebrations and the Year 6 Italian project. The parents' views are sought regularly, for example, following the London residential visit, and they are informed of the outcome of these surveys.

Progress is good.