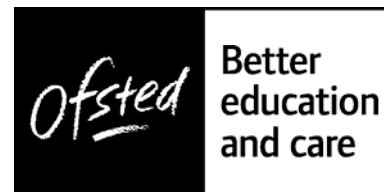


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Miss E Bloomfield  
Headteacher  
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London Road  
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Basildon  
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SS16 4QA

Dear Miss Bloomfield

### **Implementation of Vange Primary School and Nursery's Action Plan**

Following the visit of Mr A P Harrett HMI to your school on 29 and 30 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 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 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 and the Head of School Service for Essex. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid  
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF VANGE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY'S ACTION PLAN**

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

During the visit eight lessons or parts of lessons, two registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, the chair of governors 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, the deputy headteacher, a member of the governing body and a representative from the LEA.

The progress of the pupils across the school is improving, but standards remain below average in all year groups. In English at Key Stage 1, the pupils' handwriting and ability to form letters and write recognisable words are improving, but spelling remains inconsistent and simple sentence construction and punctuation are not secure. These weaknesses persist into Key Stage 2, where spelling and letter formation remain considerable problems and many pupils only write in simple sentences. The grasp of sentence punctuation is often insecure. However, some pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are making progress in addressing these weaknesses and there are clear indications that recent staffing changes are improving the pupils' grasp of basic writing conventions in the Reception class and in Year 1. Standards of speaking remain low, but more active teaching and learning are raising achievement across the school.

In mathematics at both key stages, standards are below average, with few pupils achieving the levels expected for their age. Although some pupils have a sound knowledge and recall of number bonds, many do not and are unable to tackle appropriately challenging problem-solving. Many of the pupils lack understanding of how to carry out simple calculations and a sizeable proportion were working well below the standard expected. The higher-attaining pupils did not make sufficient progress and were underachieving. Although there has been some progress in raising achievement in mathematics, standards remain low.

Teaching was satisfactory or better in seven lessons, including five in which it was good. In the good lessons, learning objectives were clear and precise and were addressed by a suitable range of activities. The pace of the lessons was brisk and purposeful and the teaching ensured that the work was challenging and interesting. Questioning techniques required the pupils to extend and justify their answers. Teaching assistants had clear roles within the lessons and worked effectively with targeted groups of the pupils to improve their rate of progress. In a science lesson, the teaching ensured that the literacy skills of the pupils were developed by encouraging the pupils to frame their predictions and comments in scientific vocabulary and appropriate sentence constructions. Similarly, in a mathematics

lesson, an insistence on the use of technical vocabulary and of speaking in full sentences improved the literacy and mathematical skills of the pupils.

Where the teaching was less successful, the pace of the lessons was slack. Occasionally, activities went on for too long and this led to boredom and a loss of attention, focus and motivation. Questioning was not well developed and was confined to asking simple questions requiring only straightforward responses from individuals, failing to involve all the pupils or to challenge the pupils adequately. Insufficient attention was given to improving the basic skills of the pupils. The role of the teaching assistants was occasionally unclear.

The pupils made satisfactory or better progress in seven lessons, including three in which progress was good. The proportion of good progress was lower than the proportion of good teaching because progress was hindered by poor standards in basic skills. Where progress was good, the pupils responded well to carefully planned lessons which matched their needs. They responded particularly well when they had an active role to play in the lessons. In the less successful lessons, progress was hindered by a lack of pace in the learning, low expectations and a limited range of learning activities.

The acting headteacher was appointed to the permanent position in April 2005. Her leadership and management are good, having a positive impact on the quality of teaching, the rate of the pupils' progress, the morale and effectiveness of the staff, and the reputation of the school in the community. She has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The good quality of her strategic planning and her management of the actions taken to address the areas for improvement are having a positive impact on provision. The deputy headteacher is benefiting from her regular line management and is providing sound support. Subject co-ordination in English and mathematics remains satisfactory and the co-ordination of science has improved and is now satisfactory.

The governing body continues to provide the school with appropriate challenge and support. The chair of the governing body meets regularly with the headteacher and has a good understanding of the quality of the school's provision. She has worked with the headteacher to improve communications with parents and the wider community, which are now stronger and effective. She has been particularly active in improving the staffing in the school and in resolving personnel issues.

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were satisfactory or better in all lessons, including six in which they were good. The pupils responded positively to good teaching which involved them purposefully in their learning. They were keen to learn and showed genuine commitment and interest in their work. Behaviour around the school was orderly and sensible. The pupils were polite and welcoming to visitors.

The LEA is providing the school with regular and effective support. Subject co-ordinators in English, mathematics and science have benefited from the LEA's

support in analysing the pupils' progress, improving planning, devising assessment procedures and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The LEA has provided the senior leadership team with appropriate support, conducting dual lesson observations to establish common judgements and providing training in self-evaluation and strategic planning.

## **Action taken to address the areas for improvement**

### **1: raise standards in English, mathematics and science**

As noted above, standards remain below average across the school, although the improvement in the pupils' achievement is a positive indication that standards are beginning to rise. Planning is monitored regularly and this is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Improvements in the use of assessment data, evaluated in more detail below, have sharpened the focus of planning so that it takes account of the needs of different groups of pupils. The senior leadership team has an accurate overview of the progress made by different groups of pupils in every year group, which has improved the focus of strategic planning. Suitable training has established a common understanding of levels of attainment and teachers are more aware of the progress and standards of pupils nationally. This has increased their expectations of the pupils and improved the challenge of the work in lessons. Teaching assistants have also received training which has had a positive impact on their contribution to the pupils' progress in lessons.

Since the resignation of the previous science co-ordinator, the deputy headteacher has taken responsibility for science across the school. Working with the LEA science adviser, the school has made improvements to the provision in science which is now satisfactory. Whole school training has supported staff in making accurate assessments in science and in planning activities that include scientific enquiry and investigation. Procedures for planning and for tracking the progress of the pupils in science have been reviewed and improved.

Progress is reasonable.

### **2: leadership and management**

This area for improvement has been considered above. The rate of improvement in leadership and management across the school has been good and has had a significant impact on the quality of provision.

Progress is good.

### **3: assessment information**

The school collects assessment information about the pupils in all year groups regularly and systematically and is using it to greater effect. The school will be part of the Intensifying Support Programme from September 2005 and has already started to analyse the rates of progress of the pupils in accordance with the methods and procedures recommended by the programme. This is providing a sound understanding of the pupils' particular strengths and weaknesses which is improving planning across the school. Nevertheless, some inconsistencies persist: using this information to set purposeful short-term curricular targets for individual pupils is inadequately implemented. The school has introduced straightforward self-assessment procedures across the school. However, the pupils have a poor understanding of their standards and progress; they tend not to reflect on their learning and assess themselves very generously even when the evidence demonstrates that their grasp of the necessary skills and understanding is weak. The school has not integrated self assessment into the course of lessons or into marking satisfactorily. Although there are many examples of good diagnostic marking, its overall quality is inconsistent.

Progress is reasonable.

### **4: attendance**

Rates of attendance and of authorised and unauthorised absence are very similar to the rates for 2003/04. This shows that the improvements since the inspection in November 2003 have been maintained. However, attendance is below the national average. An unacceptably high number of the pupils take holidays in term time without following the school's procedures for seeking the headteacher's permission. Good attendance is effectively promoted in the school and in the community and the school works closely with other agencies to improve it.

Progress is reasonable.

### **5: recruitment and retention of staff**

With the exception of the deputy headteacher, the teaching staff of the school has entirely changed since the inspection in November 2003. All but one member of the teaching staff is permanent and the temporary post will be replaced by a permanent appointment in September 2005. The morale of the staff is good and their commitment to the school is strong. Staff recognise that they have the capacity to provide a satisfactory standard of education in the school and are working purposefully and collaboratively to achieve that aim. The headteacher has built a strong team of teachers who are loyal to the school and determined to play their part in its improvement.

Progress is good.