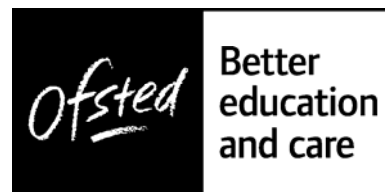


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Mr M Winter
Acting Headteacher
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23 November 2005

Dear Mr Winter

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EAST THE WATER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Michael Burghart, additional inspector, to your school on Wednesday 2 and Thursday 3 November 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2003.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider, Tribal Education, of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, senior teachers, the chair of governors and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection there has been a considerable change in staffing. The deputy headteacher has been absent and has recently resigned her post. Two teachers are currently absent on long term sick leave and three other teachers have resigned. The substantive headteacher has also resigned and will not be returning to the school. Governors have been successful in

appointing a Year 2 teacher to coordinate work in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and recruiting an experienced Year 6 teacher to work at the school for one year. The local authority is closely involved with the recruitment of new staff, including a headteacher and other senior teachers, and has given a strong commitment to governors that, as acting headteacher, you will remain at the school until a new headteacher is appointed.

Achievement and standards

The results of the 2005 national tests show that standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science remain well below the national average. Standards in English are very low throughout the school and by the end of Key Stage 2 standards overall are poor. Boys' attainment is very weak, particularly in reading and writing. Too many pupils are failing to make at least satisfactory progress and their low standards continue to cause concern. Pupils' achievements are inconsistent. While there is emerging evidence that groups of pupils in some year groups, such as in Years 1, 2, 4 and 6, are making better than average progress in reading, writing and mathematics the gap between what the pupils are expected to achieve for their age and what they are actually achieving is far too wide. The relatively higher attaining pupils are often not challenged enough in lessons.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2003:

- raise standards in all subjects, but especially in English, mathematics and science – inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. Pupils generally work hard and try to do their best, showing enthusiasm and enjoyment when their lessons are interesting and their work is challenging. Even when their work is too difficult or too easy they behave well and stay on task. Many pupils appreciate the positive changes made in the school. This is shown in the increasing care and respect that they have for each other and for the adults who work with them. They respond very positively to the school's firm but fair guidelines for behaviour. They are particularly appreciative of your willingness to talk with them and listen to their concerns. There have been no fixed term or permanent exclusions, a development which reflects positively the school's commitment to eradicating the causes of disaffection and poor behaviour.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved. In some lessons, for example in Years 2 and 6, the teachers' good subject knowledge and high expectations helped the pupils to improve their basic skills in reading and writing. The use of day to day assessment is improving and more teachers are using their marking to explain to pupils what they need to do to improve

their work, particularly in Years 1, 2, 4 and 6. This is helping the pupils make better progress. The role of teaching assistants is satisfactory. In some classes they made a very positive contribution to raising standards, although this is not yet a consistent feature in all year groups. In each key stage class routines are becoming well established and relationships between adults and pupils are good. Nevertheless, there is not enough good teaching and too much that is unsatisfactory. In the weaker lessons the pupils' work was not matched sufficiently to their different learning needs, the relatively more able pupils were not challenged enough, and it was not always clear what the pupils were expected to learn and achieve by the end of a lesson.

The provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is showing some improvement, but remains fragile. Both permanent teachers are currently absent. There is very little in the Reception class to stimulate the pupils' interest and imagination and weaknesses remain in long term curriculum planning. The drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Nursery class has been impeded by changes in staffing. The teacher currently in charge is employed for three days each week, with a nursery nurse taking overall responsibility for the two remaining days. Whilst this teacher has achieved much in a very short period of time, establishing important routines and improving the curriculum, the ability of the school's leadership to sustain improvement over the longer term is impeded by continuing staff absence and the current temporary arrangements.

The overall curriculum has improved but there is still much to do to ensure that it is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Positive efforts have been made to make lessons interesting, such as the good use of imaginative texts to improve the pupils' reading and writing skills. Pupils who have particular disabilities are included well in lessons. The pupils know about healthy lifestyles and the recent introduction of a school council has given them a voice in how the school is run. Although successful efforts have been made to improve how pupils feel about themselves, there are still too few opportunities for them to work independently and show initiative. The pupils' attendance is satisfactory. It is currently 94.6% which is in line with the national average for primary schools. The pupils feel safe and well cared for.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2003:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The senior management team has been strengthened by the inclusion of the Year 2 and Year 6 teachers. They give you good support and are positive role models for other teachers. In a relatively short period of time they have made a positive difference to improving the quality of teaching and learning. The special educational needs coordinator is also having a positive impact on improving self esteem of the pupils and helping them gain new skills and

knowledge. Governance is satisfactory and the chair of governors continues to provide good leadership to the governing body. Monitoring, evaluation and intervention strategies are rigorous and systematic. The recent introduction of new systems for assessing the pupils' attainment, tracking progress and setting targets for improvement, is a good development and has the potential to make a very positive contribution to raising standards. Subject leadership in English, mathematics and science is improving gradually but is still not good enough and is unsatisfactory overall.

As acting headteacher you provide very good leadership. You are a strong, fair and effective leader who has restored the community's and the pupils' confidence in the school. You have relentlessly challenged poor and unsatisfactory performance which has led to an overall improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Your self evaluation of the school's progress is good and reflects an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, the school's capacity to improve further and sustain the improvements already made remains fragile. The relatively high level of staff absence and resignations has been managed well but much uncertainty remains, particularly about the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers and the imminent restructuring of the school's leadership and management.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2003:

- improve the leadership and management of the school – satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority continues to meet its commitments to the school well. A range of consultants and advisory teachers have made a positive contribution to improving the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 but less so in the Foundation Stage. A senior officer and the school's adviser give good support to you and the governors, particularly in relation to staffing and recruitment.

Main judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- strengthen and improve further the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that the pupils' work is matched carefully to their different starting points and capabilities, particularly for the higher attaining pupils
- increase the rate of the pupils' progress and particularly the boys in reading, writing and mathematics.

- further improve the quality of subject leadership in English, mathematics and science.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education, Arts and Libraries for Devon.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters
Her Majesty's Inspector