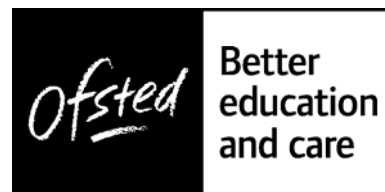


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Miss Nicola Webb
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30 November 2005

Dear Miss Webb

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF RAVENHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Helen Barter and George Logan, additional inspectors, to your school on 9 and 10 November 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2004.

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

Evidence

Inspectors observed 25 lessons, scrutinised a range of documents, and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the chair of governors, a number of the staff team, groups of pupils, and representatives from the local authority (LA). Using this evidence inspectors made the following observations to the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and two representatives from the LA.

Context

Since the school was deemed to require special measures in November 2004 there has been a significant change in the management structure. A new headteacher has been appointed from 31 October 2005.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' attainment on starting school is broadly average and their achievement in the Reception year is satisfactory. Overall, standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. The 2005 national test results at the end of Year 2 have risen from the previous year. In reading and writing they are broadly average but remain below in mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 has risen markedly in mathematics and science so that standards are broadly average. Standards in reading and writing for the higher attaining pupils are still a concern. Test results for these pupils indicate that standards in reading are below, and well below, in writing.

National test results at the end of Year 6 have also risen from the previous year. Apart from mathematics, the school met or exceeded their targets. Overall, standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Results are average in English and mathematics and above average in science. The results of the higher attaining pupils have improved from the previous year so that they are average in mathematics and science. In English the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 rose significantly from 2004, but results are still below average.

The school recognises that it has to improve standards further for the higher attaining pupils.

The weakness in English adversely affects the pupils' work in other subjects, particularly in their ability to express what they know, both orally and in writing. The school has analysed test results and is well aware that standards in writing need to rise; several strategies, such as targeted teaching and some setting by ability, have thus been introduced.

Standards in religious education are below the expectations of the Leicestershire agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages. However, teachers have an improved understanding of what needs to be taught and how pupils' progress should be tracked. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are below average. Many pupils lack the confidence to use basic skills, such as opening and saving files. The range of resources, such as data projectors, has improved. Teachers are confident in their use of ICT and are planning more opportunities for pupils to use computers across the curriculum.

In lessons, the pupils' overall standards were around those expected for their ages. The rate of progress in the 25 lessons observed was at least satisfactory and good in 14.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- raise pupils' attainment and achievement, particularly higher attaining pupils, in English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They are keen to learn and work well when they are motivated by interesting lessons. Teachers' expectations that they will behave well are clear and pupils respond well. In many lessons, they work quietly and diligently. They are keen to talk about their work and are enthusiastic about what they are learning.

Around the school, pupils behave very well. They are polite, friendly and helpful. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Assemblies promote a good sense of community where pupils enjoy singing together. Relationships with one another, and with adults, are very good. Pupils take responsibility well and make a good contribution to the positive ethos that pervades the school.

Provision for pupils' personal development is good. Pupils' safety and well-being is promoted well through the programme for personal, social and health education. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and to participate in sport in after school clubs. They contribute well to the community through fundraising activities and are beginning to contribute to school improvement through the school council. Provision for their economic well-being is satisfactory, although there are missed opportunities to help pupils understand how their learning will be useful to them in their lives beyond school.

Although pupils enjoy their education, attendance is below the national average. The higher than expected proportion of authorised absence is accounted for by a number of pupils taking extended and family holidays in term time. The promotion of regular attendance does not have a high enough focus in the school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring inspection in May 2005. Twenty five part lessons were observed. None was inadequate and fourteen were good.

Where the teaching was good, teachers had an accurate understanding about pupils' capabilities and attainment and used this to plan work effectively, so that pupils were able to make good progress. Teachers used a variety of activities, were lively and enthusiastic, and ensured that pupils were productively occupied. Where teaching was only just satisfactory the delivery was pedestrian and expectations for the higher attaining pupils were not sufficiently high.

Class teachers focus more sharply on using assessment information, including attainment data, to track pupils' progress. In addition, teachers better identify those pupils who are not likely to reach expected levels and have put strategies into place to address this, including involving pupils more in evaluating their own and other pupils' work. The introduction of targets to improve pupils' writing skills is a welcome initiative in the school's drive to raise standards. The best marking is linked to targets and enables pupils to see how they can improve. There are some examples of pupils responding positively to such marking, showing improvements in their work.

Teachers' planning pays greater attention to meeting the needs of different groups of pupils. Teaching is therefore more closely matched to pupils' capabilities.

The curriculum is satisfactory and offers pupils a broad and balanced range of opportunities to learn in all subjects. Pupils respond well when they are provided with stimulating activities which enliven the curriculum. There is scope for improvement in developing pupils' understanding of the relevance of what they are learning to everyday life.

The curriculum for children in the Reception classes is good. Good progress has been made in providing children with a suitable outdoor curriculum. They now have good opportunities to undertake a range of outdoor tasks. The majority of these are planned with specific objectives. At other times children have free access to the outdoor area and choose to play on the wide range of equipment. At present, the range and quality of large equipment to enhance children's physical development is limited.

The school is making headway in developing the use of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Pupils are reminded of their literacy targets and given subject specific vocabulary when writing in other subjects. However, pupils have difficulty in explaining their work and reasoning because there are insufficient opportunities for them to develop their speaking skills. The use of ICT across the curriculum is developing satisfactorily although there is some way to go in order to raise standards. Teachers plan more opportunities for pupils to use computers across subjects. Resources for teaching and learning are improving although some elements of the ICT curriculum are still missing due to a lack of equipment.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- improve teaching, learning, and assessment by meeting pupils' differing needs consistently – good progress
- improve the balance of the curriculum so that there are frequent opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and for Reception children to work outside – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher is committed to developing the school's capacity to improve at all levels, and is well placed to provide strong and effective leadership. Subject leaders have well defined responsibilities and are increasingly effective in raising standards. The school is in the early stages of developing good systems of self-evaluation. There are a number of procedures for monitoring and evaluation which have the potential to inform rigorous self-evaluation. Overall, governance is satisfactory. Governors have benefited from a good range of training and are beginning to be more engaged with the work of the school. They are well placed to provide strategic direction and to hold the school to account for standards achieved.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2004:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory progress
- ensure that the governors' annual report to parents includes statutory targets for pupils at the end of Year 6 – outstanding progress.

External support

The LA and other partners have provided a suitable amount of good quality support. This has contributed well to the progress the school has made. The LA has facilitated and supported the successful appointment of the headteacher. It has also facilitated support from a range of consultants which has led to improvements in teaching and governance.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

The school is permitted to appoint one newly qualified teacher.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities remain those identified in the inspection of November 2004. Within this, the school's priority is to improve standards in English, particularly with regard to writing and speaking.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services (Designate) for Leicestershire.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
H M Inspector