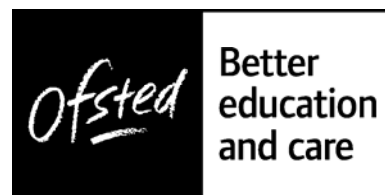


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29 November 2005

Ms Nicky Poore
Headteacher
Glascote Heath Primary School
Silverlink Road
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Staffordshire
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Dear Ms Poore

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GLASCOTE HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with David Jones HMI to your school on 7 and 8 November 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2005.

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 the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other members of staff, the chair of governors, a representative of the local authority (LA), and with pupils.

Context

The headteacher took up her appointment seven weeks before the previous inspection. The deputy headteacher has returned to work after absence. One

other member of staff who had previously been on long term sick leave has also returned to full time work.

Achievement and standards

The results of the 2005 Key Stage 2 national tests indicate a decline from the previous year. In English, mathematics and science standards were low and below the national average. Standards in English are rising slowly but remain too low. Some of the older pupils are currently achieving the level expected for their age. In a good Year 6 lesson the pupils could analyse and rephrase complex sentences and use this knowledge to improve their story writing skills. Handwriting and the general presentation of written work are improving. The pupils in Year 6 read clearly and with sound understanding. They are keen to contribute and show a reasonable breadth of vocabulary when doing so. The pupils' concentration, listening and study skills are getting better as a result of changes to the reading curriculum. The quality of spelling and sentence construction is weak and remains variable throughout the school.

In mathematics many pupils in Year 6 have a good knowledge of mathematical concepts and can use coordinates and advanced graph work to solve simple problems. In Years 4 and 5 most pupils show a sound understanding of place value, shape and graph work. Nevertheless standards overall are too low. The pupils' understanding and application of basic number operations are inconsistent. In some lessons the pupils misunderstanding led to confusion in their work, for example Year 3 pupils were uncertain about identifying symmetry in irregular shapes.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2005:

- improve teaching and learning and combat underachievement in Years 3 to 6: inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' behaviour has improved. The school has revised its behaviour policy which is implemented consistently by all staff. Behaviour management now relies more on reinforcing good behaviour with rewards and less on exclusion from classes or lessons. In some lessons which lacked challenge and interest the pupils became restless and inattentive which slowed their progress. Exclusion rates are slightly higher than national averages. Most pupils are considerate and show a good level of respect and support for each other. Attendance levels are low mainly due to families taking holidays during the school term. The school is working hard to address this issue.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2005:

- implement effective strategies for improving the behaviour of a minority of pupils: satisfactory progress.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching ranged from outstanding to inadequate and was generally satisfactory overall. The most successful lessons were characterised by high levels of involvement and interest from pupils, clear objectives and enthusiastic teachers. Teaching in the Foundation Stage was good. In one series of lessons, for example, children were encouraged to use computers to investigate number and shape and encouraged to explore different types of software. They demonstrated a high level of independent learning and were able to apply new skills when using the computer to solve simple problems.

In the weaker and unsatisfactory lessons the pupils' progress was hindered by a slow pace of learning and a lack of challenge in the teachers' questioning. Learning objectives were not reviewed effectively during the plenary sessions and the pupils work was either too easy or too difficult. Planning took very little account of the mixed ages within the group and offered little detail about how progress was to be measured. Pupils' misconceptions were not always corrected by the teachers, allowing them to retain erroneous ideas. Pupils frequently spent considerable time in lessons listening to instructions before being allowed to work on their own tasks. Inadequate teaching was observed in Year 3 where pupils failed to make sufficient progress.

The school is collecting an appropriate range of assessment information. While senior managers are using this information satisfactorily to identify groups of pupils who would benefit from enhanced support they are not yet providing teachers with enough help to improve the quality of their lesson planning. Useful information also exists on the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The full range of assessment information needs to be brought together in a format that will allow senior managers to direct provision and set challenging targets.

The breadth and balance of the curriculum vary in Key Stage 2. The school has not developed a curriculum map that ensures the appropriate balance of subject experiences between the single and mixed age classes. The time allocated to teaching literacy is not always effective and some lessons are far too short.

The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) fails to meet statutory requirements and does not enhance the quality of teaching and learning in other subjects. The monitoring of provision in this core

subject area is cursory at best. Generic schemes of work provided by the LA are appropriate but they have not been customised to match the range of learning needs in each class. The lesson plans provided by the school are outdated and most fail to provide sufficient challenge. The school has failed to address the weaknesses in ICT detailed in the inspection report.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2005:

- use assessment information to meet pupils' needs and check on their progress: satisfactory progress
- provide a suitably enriched curriculum that motivates and inspires pupils to learn and encourages them to show initiative: inadequate progress
- ensure that provision for ICT meets statutory requirements: inadequate progress.

Leadership and management

This school has rediscovered its sense of purpose and staff are working hard to tackle the key issues. They recognise that the many initiatives and changes made since the last inspection will take some time to influence standards and achievement but are optimistic that this will happen. The capacity to continue this improvement is sound.

The quality of the action plan is satisfactory overall with some weaknesses. It has an appropriate structure with each area addressed and costed. The actions identified are generally appropriate but some sections lack specific detail about what exactly is to take place and notably who is to monitor the progress made. The arrangements for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of key strategies are frequently the responsibility of one person. The document does not contain a timeline with stepping stones where progress may be measured. Appropriate success criteria have not always been provided for those areas requiring improvement. The action plan fails at times to specify which member of the school's leadership team will evaluate the quality of progress made and what will be done if progress is limited, in particular with regard to improvements in the quality of teaching. Similarly, the capacity of the deputy headteacher to support the leadership team is entirely omitted from the plan. The action plan requires further refinement and will be reviewed as part of the second monitoring inspection.

The school has made some progress in strengthening its leadership and management. Governors have organised a series of sub-groups and committees that hold the school to account more effectively than before. They have regular meetings to review progress. It is reported that parents are appreciative of the increased rigour now taken in monitoring standards.

The role of subject leaders is gradually being developed. Those responsible for standards and provision in English and mathematics have a clear view of the priorities and strengths in their subject areas. The subject leader for mathematics has completed an analysis of test results to identify strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' attainment. There are plans to integrate this with a similar analysis completed by the English coordinator.

Subject leadership in ICT is unsatisfactory. Despite the high level of resources allocated to the school the lack of detailed planning and analysis is impeding improvement. Other subject leaders have appropriate plans to monitor standards and to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in their subjects.

The headteacher has a clear and accurate view of the school's priorities. She has encouraged a high level of analysis by staff colleagues and governors and has clear plans for future development. She has taken appropriate and decisive actions when required and has established a positive ethos closely focused on standards. She is leading the drive for improvement with rigour and has high aspirations for the school. However, roles and responsibilities within the senior management team are not yet fully established and some remain unclear. The governing body has yet to take decisive action regarding the various aspects of underperformance within the management team. For example, the role of the deputy headteacher within the various action plans lacks clarity.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2005:

- improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management: inadequate progress.

External support

The LA's statement of action makes clear the expected timescale for improvement, the level of additional resources allocated to the school, and key actions expected to secure progress. It is clearly linked to the school's action plan and gives details of action, funding and evaluation. The document provides supporting information on the areas of the action plan which lack detail.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures: inadequate.

Quality of the LA's statement of action: satisfactory.

A newly qualified teacher may be appointed if the headteacher can provide a suitably qualified mentor.

Priorities for further improvement

- Establish a rigorous and systematic programme for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- Further refine assessment procedures so they are sufficiently simple to inform teaching and learning.
- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities within the senior management team and add these to the school's improvement plan.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Lifelong Learning for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Mr Ceri Morgan
H M Inspector