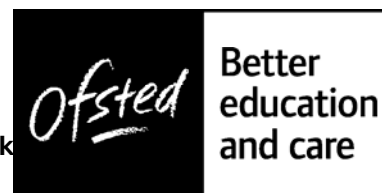


Tribal Education  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline  
0845 404045  
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



17 December 2005

Mr J Glass  
Interim Headteacher  
Woodcote Primary School  
Willowbrook Close  
Ashby-de-la-Zouch  
Leicestershire  
LE65 1JX

Dear Mr Glass

## **Implementation of Woodcote Primary School's Action Plan**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Mr A Alder HMI to your school on 7 and 8 December 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 February 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 current and next interim headteacher, nominated staff and representatives from the governing body and local authority (LA).

### **Context**

The substantive headteacher's retirement has now been resolved. However, the school is entering an uncertain period. The interim headteacher leaves at the end of term and will be replaced, for two terms, by second interim appointment. In addition, two teachers are due to go on an extended period of absence, suitable temporary appointments have been made.

## **Achievement and standards**

The provisional results in the most recent national tests in 2005 were reported at the last visit. The validated data analysis confirms that the standards of attainment in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 tests, although generally close to the school's targets, were too low and that pupil achievement was inadequate.

However, there is ample evidence that the pupils now make satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. This means that their progress over time, particularly since the start of this term, is sound and often good. Nonetheless, teaching has to be consistently good in order to make up for some weaker teaching in the past and in order to compensate for the low starting points of many of the pupils. In some lessons the quality of learning was rather uneven. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities were well supported and made satisfactory or good progress, but lessons did not consistently present a challenge for higher attaining pupils.

In each class there is a wide range of ability. A few pupils produce work that is of a high standard and some older pupils are articulate and write confidently. However, standards of literacy and numeracy for a significant number of pupils are below those expected. Many pupils do not write accurately or fluently and many have basic weaknesses in mental mathematics. Half of the children in the Reception class had no nursery education and their low starting points mean that their basic skills and knowledge are well below those expected. Many have an insecure grasp of basic numbers and letter sounds, and are weak in forming letters and numbers. Nonetheless they have made good progress in their social development since starting in September.

Procedures for gathering and using assessment data have improved, although there is a long way to go. The school makes good use of end of year test results in order to analyse broad strengths and weaknesses and to inform target setting. The school's targets for national tests in 2006 and 2007 have been revised upwards, particularly in mathematics. These ambitious and challenging targets reflect the school's higher expectations and determination to accelerate pupil achievement.

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

- raise standards and improve the pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science—satisfactory progress overall and good in mathematics.

## **Personal development and well-being**

Personal development and well-being are good overall. The school has a calm and purposeful climate and a strongly inclusive ethos. Around the school the pupils are friendly and interact sensibly. They behave well and most have positive attitudes to learning. Attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory in all lessons including over half that were good or outstanding.

In lessons the pupils generally comply quickly with instructions and follow routines. They are given good opportunities to participate. They collaborate well and often work with interest and enthusiasm. The stronger teaching and improved routines ensure that there are fewer incidents of off task or distracted behaviour. Moreover, these are well managed by teachers and teaching assistants so do not disrupt the work of other pupils. The challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils is skilfully and quickly handled. There is, however, still a tendency for pupils to lose concentration, particularly when the pace of learning is too pedestrian.

At 94.3% for the school year to date attendance is satisfactory. The school has consolidated the excellent improvement in attendance achieved last year.

The school does a lot to promote the pupils' health and welfare. A number of specific initiatives have involved pupils this term. The First Steps scheme has successfully encouraged pupils to walk to school and has ensured that they understand basic road safety; the fruit scheme has been well received by the pupils; and the anti-bullying week has had a positive impact on the pupils. The school is proactive in seeking pupils' views and promoting their responsibilities. Learning logs are well used with the older pupils to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. A school council is being established.

### **Quality of provision**

The overall quality of teaching continues to strengthen. The school's monitoring indicates that teaching is at least satisfactory, with over half of lessons good or better. On this visit the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons and good in just under half. The strengths identified previously have been consolidated. All lessons had good features. Learning was clearly guided by learning objectives that were properly shared with the pupils; the pupils were well managed and directed; and work was carefully explained and well prepared with a good variety of resources and some interesting activities. Common routines, such as paired talk and using mini whiteboards, are effective in ensuring that all the pupils are engaged in learning. Group work was well organised and well supervised by the adults in each class. The work of teaching assistants is well informed and they are proactive in supporting the pupils. Classroom displays support learning and celebrate some of the pupils' most interesting work. The best teaching built well on what the pupils had done previously. In these lessons work was well paced with a suitable balance of teacher input and independent activities and the pupils' understanding was skilfully assessed and promoted through clever questioning.

There remain some weaknesses in teaching, however, even in lessons that were satisfactory overall. In several lessons the pace of teaching was too slow at key points, particularly when teacher led sessions went on too long or when questioning was weak. When questioning was too closed, undifferentiated or untargeted it failed to engage pupils or stimulate varied responses or deeper thinking. Although lessons have clear objectives, specific outcomes are rarely defined. Teachers need to consider more precisely what the pupils will achieve from each session and what the different outcomes will be for pupils with different abilities.

Marking is sound and often good. The most effective marking gives the pupils a clear indication of what they have achieved and what they need to do next. Routine assessment and tracking of pupil progress in core subjects is developing well, particularly in mathematics, although it is not yet systematic enough for the school to be able to demonstrate the pupils' progress over time. Systems have been devised in order to do this. However, the pupils are not aware of their target level or the level that they are currently working at. Insufficient use is made of short or medium term targets to guide improvement.

The school has a good procedure for reviewing individual educational plans. It has started the process of identifying gifted and talented pupils, but developing specific provision for higher attaining pupils is at an early stage.

Teaching has been strengthened by the process of peer coaching. Specific areas for improvement have been identified and these have been a focus for peer observation and feedback. This has given teachers greater confidence and has successfully promoted better self evaluation.

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

- improve the quality of teaching—good progress.

### **Leadership and management**

The interim headteacher has continued to provide expert and energetic guidance for the school's work and development. His day to day management is excellent. His high expectations and calm assurance have raised morale and instilled confidence in pupils, parents and staff. The results of parental and pupil questionnaires confirm the view that the school has improved significantly under his leadership. He has given the school a clear vision and agenda for improvement and has established good systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Responsibilities have been suitably delegated to other staff. The role of the governing body has been developed and support from the LA has been well prioritised and coordinated.

The school's self-evaluation is effective. However, although its evaluation of the quality of teaching is broadly accurate it is rather generous because it focuses too much on teaching rather than learning.

A framework for subject leadership has been established and the roles and responsibilities of curriculum managers have been helpfully summarised through subject policies. Curriculum leadership in mathematics is good although other subject coordinators tend to manage rather than lead curriculum development and evaluation. There has developed a culture of effective self-evaluation that is soundly based on a systematic programme of lesson observations, work scrutiny and monitoring by curriculum managers. The school has sensibly extended its programme of lesson observations to include peer observations.

The school has successfully strengthened the quality of teaching and improved pupils' rates of progress. This is already improving pupil achievement and will eventually raise standards. The present staff and leadership have demonstrated that the school has the capacity to improve. However, the school is entering an unsettled period with a number of changes in staff, some of which will be temporary. The next term will test the extent to which the school's systems and procedures are properly embedded and able to sustain the school's improvement.

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

- improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels—good progress.

### **External support**

The quality and impact of the LA support has been good. Training, guidance and evaluation have been well targeted and timely. The governing body is appreciative of the training provided, and the school values the specialist support from subject advisers.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures—good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection—good.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure the that quality of learning is more even and more rapid in lessons
- develop the systematic tracking of pupil progress and make more effective use of this data to plan what pupils need to improve
- strengthen the way that marking and targets are used to guide the pupils' progress over the short and medium term
- develop the leadership roles of subject coordinators.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker  
**H M Inspector**