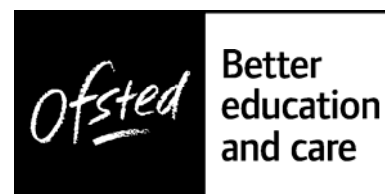


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09 November 2005

Miss V Palmer
Headteacher
The Pinchbeck East CE Primary School
Fennell Road
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE11 3RB

Dear Miss Palmer,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PINCHBECK EAST CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Mr M Mumby HMI, Mr A Lemon and Mrs P Cox to your school on 19 and 20 October 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

During the visit 16 lessons or part of lessons, 2 registration sessions and 2 assemblies were observed. The pupils were observed at break times and generally around school. Discussions were held with the headteacher, representatives from the local authority, the chair, and vice-chair of governors, a parent governor, members of the leadership team and some support staff. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils. School and local authority data on standards were analysed and samples of pupils' work were examined. A range of other school documents

was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the chair of the governing body and two representatives from the LEA.

Context

The school continues to experience uncertainty of staffing. A permanent headteacher has been appointed replacing the acting headteacher who had been in post for the previous year. Governors did not appoint a deputy at the first round of interviews and are re-advertising the post.

The fall in numbers on roll necessitated reductions in staff at the end of last term. Long term and short term illness amongst a small number of staff continues to require the use of short term supply teachers. The school has a new mathematics subject leader and has made a fulltime appointment to meet the requirements of workforce reform. A new learning mentor has been appointed on a part time basis. The school is currently appointing a new caretaker.

Achievement and standards

Standards are improving. The results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 last term were broadly average in mathematics and science, and above average in English. This reflects the strong focus given to raising standards last year. Standards in Reception and Years 1 and 2 are consistently in line with expectations.

Standards seen in lessons varied too widely, particularly in Key Stage 2 where progress was erratic because work was not always pitched at the right level and teacher expectations were not always high enough. Standards of writing remain too low for the older pupils but are secure in Years 1 and 2.

Handwriting, presentation and basic skills in punctuation and spelling vary substantially. Handwriting has not been taught well in the past and consequently is weak overall in Years 3 to 6. It has improved and is now satisfactory in Key Stage 1. The older pupils do not use their writing often enough in subjects other than English. The over-use of worksheets often detracts from opportunities to challenge the pupils to use their writing skills to the full.

Standards in reading are satisfactory, but more pupils could do even better. The school has identified this as an area for development but has yet to devise precise strategies to bring this about.

Standards in science have improved substantially in the last year from a very low base and are now average. Work seen in pupils' books still varies too much, reflecting marked differences in the quality of teaching. There are weaknesses in planning and preparation, and some of the teachers' subject knowledge.

In mathematics, standards have remained at broadly average levels for several years. The quality of teaching remains inconsistent and resources are inadequate. This is an area the school has identified and is putting right.

The school has set challenging targets for the current Year 6 which if achieved will maintain improvements and build upon the standards set last year. However, the pupils' work suggests that these targets may be hard to meet as many have made insufficient progress in recent years.

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

- Raise standards in writing across the school, particularly those of boys, and standards in science across the school – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Personal development and well being remain very good and are significant strengths of the school. The pupils enjoy school and in most lessons have good attitudes to learning and try hard. This is particularly so where the teaching is stimulating and the content of lessons is pitched appropriately.

In most lessons behaviour is outstanding. The pupils co-operate and work well together. Around the school and at break times behaviour is very good. The playground is a pleasant orderly place where pupils are well cared for and safe. They report that there is very little bullying. The pupils are courteous and friendly to visitors and each other. They play and socialise well and relationships are very good between pupils and between pupils and teachers. The new learning mentor is having a positive impact on the small numbers of pupils with behavioural problems or with less positive attitudes to school. However her role is not sufficiently understood by all pupils and staff.

The pupils have plenty of opportunities to be energetic at break times which they use to the full, helping to develop a healthy and active lifestyle. Access to milk and fruit at break times further encourages healthy eating.

Attendance is above the national average. The pupils are equipped with the necessary skills for life beyond primary school adequately, but a significant number could be developing and using these skills still further.

Quality of provision

The overall quality of teaching and learning remains broadly the same as on the previous visit and is unsatisfactory overall. Although examples of outstanding and good teaching were seen, too much remains inadequate. Of the sixteen lessons seen two were outstanding, two were good, seven were satisfactory and five were inadequate.

The very best lessons had a dynamic approach with content that engaged the pupils at the right level. Pace was rapid and pupils made very good progress. In these lessons the teachers carefully checked the pupils' progress and used the information to plan their next steps for learning. Clear, open-ended questions made pupils think hard and give reasoned answers. Pupils had precise and well understood targets to help them improve their work. In the unsatisfactory lessons, the overall aims were unclear and work was unimaginative or ill-matched to the pupils' needs and abilities. The teachers had only a vague picture of pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses and the marking of written work was often superficial.

The teaching assistants have the skills and knowledge to make a valuable contribution to teaching because they are now involved in the planning of lessons. However, some teachers do not make effective use of them particularly at the beginning and end of lessons. Very effective work was seen, for example, where teaching assistants worked with small groups, but in the opening and closing sections of the lesson they missed opportunities to make contributions to the learning or assessment of pupils.

The use of targets is now more securely in place throughout the school. In a few classes pupils are fully aware of what they need to improve and teachers refer to this in their marking. Elsewhere, however, pupils do not know what they need to do to improve their work and the teachers' marking does not give them sufficient guidance.

The work the pupils do is sufficiently broad to cover all the subjects required in the National Curriculum. The time available for teaching meets recommended minima but is not always well used. The short periods of

reading undertaken in most classes, for example, are not an effective use of time, being too short to allow for substantial development of skills and understanding.

The pupils are well cared for and those with particular needs receive the right sort of help. Pupils who have learning difficulties make the same progress as others and this largely mirrors the quality of teaching they receive.

Pupils do not know enough about other cultures and beliefs within our society or further afield. Developments in this area were progressing well but have stalled.

Progress in improving culture knowledge and understanding as identified by the inspection in July 2004 has been inadequate.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher has quickly established a very clear and accurate view of the school. Her assessment of teaching strengths and weaknesses is perceptive. She knows where the problems remain and what needs to be done. Teamwork is improving and the restructured leadership team now draws well on the experienced staff, is appropriate to the size and needs of the school and is well placed to influence its work in all the areas for improvement.

A clear vision has been established and is now shared by most staff. Several initiatives have been tackled such as improving planning, but the school is not fully evaluating the impact of these. As a result, the quality of teaching is not improving quickly enough.

The quality of the subject leaders' work is still uneven. Some have clear plans for developing and improving provision. In mathematics, for example, the new coordinator has reviewed pupils' work, test results and teachers' planning. In a short time, she has identified resource needs and raised the profile of the subject. Additionally, science continues to make steady progress in development. However, in English the coordinator has an insufficiently clear idea of where improvements are needed. For example the current use of a short reading session every day in most classes has been identified as an ineffective use of time but there are no clear strategies to do something about it.

The school has established a system for checking and tracking pupils' progress but this is yet to be embedded as routine within the teachers' cycle of planning and reviewing what they teach. The current set of computers is

inadequate to support the new software needed for this system. This remains an obstacle to more efficient and effective recording and analysis of relevant information.

The governing body has improved its knowledge and understanding of the school and provides good support to the senior staff. It has a close grip on finances and fully understands the impending decisions that need to be taken. Its monitoring of the work of the school is adequate. It is improving its understanding of issues around standards and progress through the information it receives from the school and through training from the local authority.

The work of the governors and senior staff together with input from the local authority is sufficiently well focussed and purposeful to give confidence that the school has the capacity to improve. But the rate of progress needs to accelerate and much will depend on the rigour with which the priorities for improvement are tackled.

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

- Improve the leadership and management of the school and the work of the governing body – satisfactory progress.
- Establish whole-school record keeping systems – inadequate progress.

External support

The Local Authority continues to provide significant help and advice to the school over staffing and has arranged the secondment of an experienced deputy headteacher to support the new headteacher. They have facilitated the appointment of the current mathematics subject leader. These initiatives have given stability to the senior management team. They have given further helpful support to the governing body as it addresses the issues of staffing and budget shortfalls.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures is satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection is satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed but subject to the following qualifications:

- all requirements for the appointment of newly qualified teachers are met;
- careful consideration in allocating a mentor is given to the qualities necessary to promote good professional development of a newcomer to teaching.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve the leadership and management of the school so as to have a greater impact on the quality of teaching and learning where this is weakest.
- Tackle the remaining staffing issues as a matter of urgency.
- Implement the planned assessment and tracking system as soon as possible.
- Regain the momentum on improving pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Sutton
H M Inspector