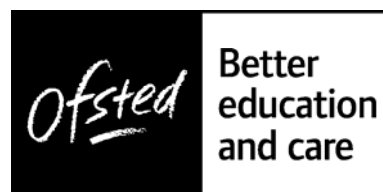


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Dear Mrs Garland-Grimes

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF KELFORD SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with John Young HMI and Roger Hartley HMI to your school on 2-3 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 April 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 17 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with all members of the senior leadership team, subject coordinators, the chair of the governors and two Local Authority (LA) representatives. Discussion with pupils took place informally during the course of their work and play.

Context

Over a two year period there has been substantial discontinuity in the leadership of the school with four headteachers in that period. The new associate head teacher has been in post only since September 2005. The governing body asked the LA to withdraw the delegated budget. The LA is now the responsible authority for the school and is working in partnership with governors.

Achievement and standards

It is difficult to get a clear understanding of the pupil's progress over time as the systems for tracking and accurately assessing attainment are not consistently in place. The pupil's learning was good in 4 lessons and was directly related to the best teaching. Lively activities that captured the pupils' attention and motivated them were key features of good lessons. Effective deployment of teaching assistants (TAs) who were involved with learning, as opposed to maintaining a care role, significantly contributed to pupils' progress across a range of activities.

In 6 lessons their learning was satisfactory but in 7 it was barely so and was inadequate in too many. Pupils were often presented with work unsuitable for their needs or level of ability. Individual assessment did not inform planning properly and groups of pupils were passive listeners for far too long.

The new associate headteacher and the leadership team have effective plans and training opportunities in place to improve this key area of the school's work and some developments have taken place. For example, moderation of teacher assessment using the P Scales is in hand and an audit of individual needs has been undertaken. Nevertheless, the impact on improving pupil progress has not yet been achieved.

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

- improve the assessment and monitoring of pupil progress –inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

The school has, quite rightly, been prioritising the considerable number of health and safety issues not reported in the April 2005 inspection. Effective work has ensured a reduction in recorded incidents and, though still high, the number of violent incidents against staff has been reduced. A programme of training for behaviour management is in place and risk assessments have been undertaken. The majority of pupils behave well and show some enjoyment in school. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure those with the most challenging behaviour are managed safely. Nevertheless, there were occasions on this visit when confrontational behaviour was exacerbated by inappropriate intervention, sometimes involving the pulling of children to make them conform.

The environment for students at post-16 does not provide an adult ethos and one group in particular are not treated as adults.

This area was not identified as requiring improvement by the inspection of April 2005. Overall, provision is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

The improvements to the curriculum are effectively coordinated by senior staff who provide clear direction and leadership. Subject coordinators feel involved and empowered by the collaborative process. Sensible measures are in place to ensure all statutory obligations are met. Changes to time allocations are waiting ratification from the governors and missing areas of the National Curriculum have been addressed.

The quality and appropriateness of the curricular provision is being monitored carefully. The school has accurately evaluated where the inconsistencies in quality remain. Continuity and progression between and within classes is being scrutinised by coordinators. The implementation of the national strategies, particularly at Key Stage 3, is at an early stage. There are a number of factors that hamper further progress in this area: accommodation inadequacies across the school; the amount and use of specialist resources; the poor state of developments in information and communication technology (ICT); and weaknesses in classroom organisation.

However, a considerable amount of training has taken place since the appointment of the associate headteacher which has improved the knowledge of staff and their awareness and understanding of curriculum planning. The LA and the leadership team are working closely with subject coordinators to produce realistic action plans, which are based on a comprehensive analysis of strengths and weaknesses. A new format of medium and long term planning has

been implemented which aims to provide a focus on pupil achievement. Although at early stages, the best planning clearly indicates objectives relevant to the pupils' level of learning and takes account of their specific needs. The quality and consistency of planning is being monitored carefully by managers.

The quality of teaching and learning varies from good to unsatisfactory but overall is satisfactory. There are areas of good teaching which can be used to disseminate best practice. Such lessons have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and are tightly focused. They are lively and make good use of a range of teaching methods to capture pupil attention and make learning fun. When TAs are involved in the planning of lessons and have a clear understanding of what pupils know, and what they need to do next, they make a significant contribution to the progress pupils make. Some good examples of using TAs to record pupil's reactions and learning in class to inform future planning were observed. Some lessons rely too heavily on passive listening for far too long. This means that many children can be sat for periods of time with little or no engagement. While signing and symbols are used to support communication their application is inconsistent across the school. The availability and use of ICT and technical aids to augment communication are poor.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, and staff expertise – satisfactory progress
- ensure the curriculum is fully taught, meets the needs of all pupils and has enough time for learning – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The school has undergone a considerable period of staff instability over the past two years, including four headteachers. The current associate headteacher, in post only since September, has been seconded from her substantive leadership for an initial two terms. She is providing good leadership and enjoys the full confidence of the staff. She has made a determined start in addressing the areas of improvement set out in the action plan. As a result of her own detailed analysis of the school's situation, she is tackling additional problems accurately. Particular issues include: high levels of staff absence; low morale among support staff; inconsistent use of behaviour management strategies; and a need to shift the emphasis from care to learning in a more balanced way.

An audit of pupils' individual needs had been undertaken to provide an accurate basis on which to plan provision and identify what needs to be done. A number of procedures and structures are being put in place, for example, strategies to respond quickly and efficiently to staff absence and establishing clear roles and responsibilities for senior teachers. A brisk and well judged pace has been adopted so that staff understand their role and their contribution to school improvement. Nevertheless, many initiatives are still at early stages of development and their full impact on pupil achievement has yet to be seen.

There have been important and constructive changes to the membership and constitution of the governing body. New governors have been appointed and committees reorganised. The chair of governors provides firm leadership and there are effective plans to reduce the large deficit budget over the next three years. However, these plans are not formalised and there are a number of related issues to resolve, for example, the long term leadership of the school and determining the scope of the LA to give financial support.

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

- improve the leadership and management throughout the school especially governance and financial management – good progress.

External support

The LA's involvement with the school since the inspection in April 2005 has been decisive. It most successfully negotiated the secondment of the associate headteacher which has driven the improvements since September 2005. High level support from the School Improvement Adviser (SIA) and other strategic management groups have gained the confidence of the staff in school and increased the capacity for improvement.

An external consultant has been appointed to work with the SIA to focus on improvements in teaching and learning and other whole school matters. A range of other support mechanisms are in place including quick responses to critical situations created by high staff absence.

The governors are fully involved and work in partnership with the LA.

The LA's statement of action is clear and addresses all the main areas for improvement including those highlighted by the associate headteacher. It appropriately identifies timescales, resources and monitoring arrangements. It makes clear that support will be ongoing until the school has recovered fully. Agreement has been made for decisions about the longer term leadership of the school to be in place by April 2006. This is important to resolve some aspects of the low morale of staff.

Main Judgements

- Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.
- Quality of LA's statement of action – good.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities remain those identified in the inspection of April 2005. Additional emphasis should be given within these areas to improve the consistency of appropriate behaviour management strategies for those with the most challenging behaviour. Raising expectations of what pupils can learn should be an important element of improving the teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Eileen Visser
HM Inspector