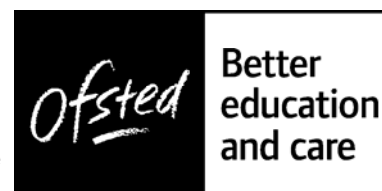


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7 December 2005

Ms C Ellins
The Headteacher
Bellemoor School
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Dear Ms Ellins

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BELLEMOOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Chris Redman HMI and Michael Pipes Additional Inspector to your school on 16 and 17 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 the school at work, scrutinised documents and met with the pupils, headteacher, senior leaders and the chair of governors.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit there have been some important changes to staff including the appointment of a deputy headteacher. The school has also experienced a fall in the numbers of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Standards are below average overall and achievement for a significant number of pupils is inadequate. This agrees with the school's own self evaluation. The progress that all pupils have made over time is unsatisfactory and this is due to the disruption of staff changes, the lack of schemes of work and the inadequate use of data, until this term, to plan for pupils' learning.

In the lessons observed standards are below average. However, progress is often better in individual lessons as teaching has improved in English, mathematics and science. However, because of the long legacy of under-achievement pupils have missed out on some key basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This makes their learning difficult as they struggle with basic language skills and independent problem solving activities. Speaking is poorly developed and often pupils could not explain their work or the difficulties they met. Some pupils struggled to pronounce technical words and name basic scientific equipment. Too few of the pupils read with the understanding typical of their age and too many found difficulty with solving simple problems. This is affecting all aspects of their learning and as a result progress is unsatisfactory overall.

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

- Improve standards and achievement by ensuring all pupils are effectively challenged and enthused by their work - inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes have improved and more pupils are better prepared to learn in lessons. They are more punctual at the start of the lesson, behave better and around the school conduct themselves in a more mature and responsible way. The new lunch time arrangements have been welcomed by the younger pupils making them feel safer and more confident. It has also speeded up the process of getting lunch, allowing more time for house meetings and assemblies.

In a number of lessons seen, pupils are enjoying the activities planned for them and this is an improvement since the last visit. The debate in one Year 9 lesson about increasing the time of the school day was lively. Pupils were clearly enjoying the learning experience while gaining a lot of additional knowledge about democratic government. The school has made a positive move to improve the healthy lifestyle of the pupils by improving the catering at the school, and by ensuring that pupils have regular access to water and exercise. Physical education (PE) remains a favourite lesson for a number of pupils and pupils make a choice to attend a number of sport related after-school clubs. Attendance, while still below average, has improved for some groups of pupils to above average because the school now regularly monitors the attendance of different classes and the attendance at each lesson.

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

- Improve pupils' attitudes, attendance and punctuality- satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and has improved since the previous monitoring visit; it ranged from outstanding in a Spanish lesson to unsatisfactory in a mathematics lesson. Lessons now include a wider range of teaching strategies, more interesting explanations and greatly improved behaviour management. However, some weaknesses are still evident such as the provision for developing pupils' literacy skills, marking and the tendency for teachers to talk too much in lessons. Questions are often posed to the whole class, but answers are accepted from individuals rather than using strategies to involve everyone in the learning process.

Learning did not reflect the quality of the teaching and was unsatisfactory because pupils have so much to catch up on. Pupils listen passively for too long and do not understand the relevance of activities such as making notes. They are over dependent on adult help, and teachers are reluctant to get them to work in smaller discussion groups because the pupils have had no culture of this in the past.

The curriculum is sound for Key Stage 3, but is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 4. The selection of subjects for Key Stage 4 pupils has been increased to include suitable vocational elements and additional courses provided by other institutions. However, the administration of these options is unsatisfactory. In Key Stage 4, the teaching timetable is currently inadequate and the allocation of time to core subjects is unbalanced. Many Year 10 pupils miss important core subject lessons because of clashes with courses at the local college. These pupils get five 'study periods' but these are not taught sessions. Pupils are expected to make up lost work independently and the lack of teaching makes learning unsatisfactory during this time.

Provision for the pupils who have learning difficulties varies widely in quality but is unsatisfactory overall. Good analysis is made of the pupils' reading and comprehension weaknesses. Targets are set to raise standards, but these are too vague to use as a measurement of whether the pupils are making enough progress. Although individual education plans include a description of the provision required by each pupils, this is also too vague and does not include how teachers need to adapt their lessons to address the identified weaknesses. The provision for individual help in the learning support centre is good. An excellent ethos has been established within which the pupils feel sufficiently confident to work on their weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. The pupils receive good support in lessons from the associate professionals assigned to them, but there is insufficient adaptation of activities to help the pupils access the work and to develop as independent learners.

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

- Develop effective procedures to improve teaching and learning, particularly to promote effective and consistent behaviour management – satisfactory progress.
- Ensure that the school's curriculum provides all pupils with equal opportunities to achieve – inadequate progress.
- Promote pupils' literacy and numeracy development across all subjects of the curriculum – inadequate progress.

Leadership and management

Changes in staffing at senior and middle levels have improved leadership and management. Several staff left or were moved to other responsibilities and the headteacher now has in sight her target of an effective and efficient senior team. Quality assurance processes have begun to have a positive impact on the overall standard of teaching, particularly in identifying and managing inadequate performance. The recently appointed deputy and senior teacher responsible for quality assurance now have a very good training and development scheme for middle managers. This incorporates a structured programme of continuing professional development for all teachers. These initiatives have given heads of department a clearer understanding of line management responsibilities, including performance management review of their staff; improved understanding of data analysis; and increasing accountability for standards and results in their subject area. Middle managers are responding well to these opportunities and there is a clear and beneficial impact for the school.

The governors are making an effective contribution and understand the strengths of the school and the necessary areas for improvement.

Except where there are staff absences due to long-term sickness, the school now has a full complement of qualified teachers. The pupils interviewed said that this has improved their lessons considerably by providing continuity and a more orderly progression in their learning. There was a strong field for the recent deputy head post and adequate interest in other positions but there continues to be difficulties in appointing suitable English teachers. This has led to reduced provision and inadequate curriculum time for the subject.

The school has used the expertise available in the local education authority to ensure that planning for the next prospectus and governors' report meet statutory requirements.

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

- Build on improvement made by the new headteacher to improve leadership and management to build a strong focus on raising achievement - good progress
- Ensure that there is effective management of ICT across the whole school - Not evaluated on this visit.

- Enact a strong and effective staff recruitment and retention policy - satisfactory progress
- Ensure that the prospectus and governors' report meet statutory requirements - satisfactory progress.

External support

- The school works well with other providers to expand the curriculum at Key Stage 4.
- The LEA's monitoring has been satisfactory; they are aware of the weaknesses in the provision for English and have relevant initial ideas on how these can be addressed through the provision of an AST.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed unless with agreement of the lead inspector.

Priorities for further improvement

- Secure good staffing for the English department
- Improve the provision for literacy across the curriculum
- Adapt lessons to address the specific learning needs at different stages of attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Kelsey
H M Inspector