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13 December 2005

Mr Dave Walsh
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Walsh

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EASTLING PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Linda McGill HMI to your school on 21 and 22 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 the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, two governors including the chair, members of the school council, the literacy coordinator and the school improvement partner. Eight lessons were observed, two from each class.

Context

The school has undergone a significant change in staffing since the last inspection. One teacher has returned from sick leave and three new staff have been appointed. The school now has a full and permanent team of staff

in all four classes. The school roll has increased by around 10% and now stands at 97 pupils.

Achievement and standards

Standards have risen since the last inspection and achievement is much improved. The 2005 national test results show that Key Stage 1 pupils attained standards that were higher than the national average in reading and mathematics and around average in writing. The more able pupils achieved higher standards in English than in mathematics. In Key Stage 2, standards were close to average in English, mathematics and science. However, these pupils made much better than average progress because of significantly lower starting points than expected when they entered Key Stage 2. Evidence from lesson observations during this monitoring inspection and the school's own data on pupil achievements show that standards are at expected levels.

Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed. Writing continues to be an area for improvement in both key stages, particularly for the more able pupils and boys. The school has set challenging targets for raising standards still further. The records of pupils' progress kept by the school show that it is on course to meet them. New systems for assessing progress enable the staff to identify when the pupils might not be achieving well enough and to provide additional support for them.

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

- improve achievement for all pupils—good progress.

Personal development and well-being

The school promotes the pupils' personal development and well-being very well. Relationships between adults and children are friendly and supportive. The youngest ones have settled well into school and are keen and willing. The oldest pupils have mature and sensible attitudes to their work and across the school pupils concentrate well, cooperate with one another, and enjoy what they are doing. The pupils are enthusiastic learners. Behaviour is good both in the classroom and outdoors. The pupils play energetically but look out for others smaller than themselves. The school council takes its role seriously and plays an important part in discussing ideas about the school's future.

Attendance has improved and is currently above the national figure for last year.

Quality of provision

There have been significant improvements to the quality of teaching since the inspection in April and the school is well on its way to meeting the targets for teaching set out in the action plan. The school has done much to make sure

that the teachers who are new to the school develop their practice quickly and that approaches to planning, for example, are consistent from one class to the next. Training and development activities have been supplemented by frequent observations of the teachers at work in the classroom. These observations have been helpful in identifying areas which need improvement, as well as affirming good practice. The school, with the support of the school improvement partner, evaluates the quality of teaching as consistently satisfactory with a significant proportion of good teaching. The findings of this inspection are broadly in line with the school's findings but show that there is still some inconsistency. Eight lessons were observed and the teaching was good in four, satisfactory in three, and unsatisfactory in one.

One of the school's major thrusts in improving the quality of teaching has been to make sure that work is suitably matched to the pupils' learning needs. Better use of assessment information has successfully underpinned the improvement. The degree of challenge in lessons has increased and is generally appropriate, although there is still scope to stretch the higher attaining pupils further. The pupils have noticed the changes and report that they enjoy their lessons more. Confident use of interactive whiteboards enhances teaching and learning. Learning is slower in lessons where the pace is more leisurely or where the objectives are not discussed with the pupils. Consequently, pupils do not build on their knowledge and understanding at a sufficient rate.

The teachers' plans identify clearly the part the teaching assistants will play in lessons. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the pupils' learning in lessons. The plans also show how the pupils' skills in English and mathematics can be developed in other subjects. This has brought more coherence to the curriculum.

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

- improve the quality of teaching—satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The school has prepared a very thorough and detailed action plan. It is of good quality and targets the right areas in order to bring about improvement in the quality of provision for pupils. There are good systems in place to brief the governing body on the progress of the plan. As a result the governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The recently formed teaching and learning committee is a very useful means of enabling governors to monitor progress on a monthly basis and to hold the management of the school accountable for improvements.

School leaders are now much more focused on the pupils' learning and achievement and have a good understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie. Thorough systems for tracking the pupils' progress have been

implemented so that a picture of how individual pupils are doing is beginning to emerge. This is enabling staff to identify underachievement at an early stage. In addition, the regular analyses of pupils' work provide opportunities for senior staff to evaluate the impact of improvements to teaching and learning.

There is a high profile given to the monitoring of lessons by the headteacher, subject leaders and external advisers. This is helpful to individual teachers in improving their work. However, not enough attention is paid to evaluating the pupils' achievements and whether the learning is appropriate for their abilities. The demands made on school leaders to improve provision for pupils are considerable; they are rising to meet the challenges.

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

- improve the quality and impact of leadership—good progress.

External support

The school is receiving significant support from the local education authority. This is of good quality and supports key improvements identified in the school's action plan in particular the quality of teaching and learning and in leadership and management. Regular advice from the school improvement partner is helping to focus leadership on the pupils' learning and achievement. Support from external consultants is enabling the teachers to improve the quality of their lesson planning and assessment of the pupils' progress. A particularly good feature is the regular, joint observations of lessons by the school improvement partner and the headteacher. These observations provide effective moderation of the school's judgements on the quality of teaching and learning.

The local education authority's statement of action is of satisfactory quality. It makes clear how progress will be monitored and evaluated, and by whom.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures—good progress.

Newly qualified teachers may not yet be appointed. This judgment will be reviewed at subsequent visits.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue with the action plan as published.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Chisnall
H M Inspector