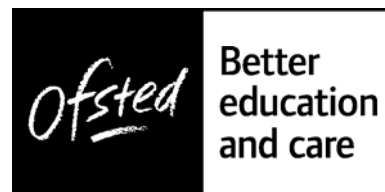


Tribal Education  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline  
0845 404045  
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



8 December 2005

Mr Bill Grace  
Norton Fitzwarren Church of England  
Voluntary Controlled School  
Blackdown View  
Norton Fitzwarren  
Taunton  
TA2 6TB

Dear Mr Grace

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NORTON FITZWARREN CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOL**

**Introduction**

Following my visit with Andrew Redpath HMI 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 December 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's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, a group of pupils, the chair of governors, staff and a representative from the local authority.

**Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has reduced its classes from five to four. Each class is now made up of two year groups.

## **Achievement and standards**

Achievement and standards are unsatisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2 in the 2005 national test results, and satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently stretched and too few achieve the higher levels. However, in lessons observed, pupils make satisfactory progress, although this has yet to show in their results in national tests.

By the age of seven, pupils attain below expected levels in English, mathematics and science. There has been some improvement in reading and writing, but standards remain too low. Results gained at the end of Year 6 show that standards are consistently low in English, mathematics and science. There is a particular weakness in writing where the number of pupils gaining higher levels shows a declining trend.

The school is beginning to use data to monitor pupils' progress and identify areas for improvement. Those pupils with learning difficulties make good progress in developing their independence and social skills. They also make good progress with reading and spelling in Key Stage 1. This is due to the early identification of their problems and the effective use of individual and small group support to raise their achievement. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.

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

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science – inadequate progress.

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

Pupils enjoy coming to school and behave very well. They are polite and respectful towards adults and form good relationships with each other. Attendance is good and the school does not find it necessary to exclude pupils.

Pupils learn to adopt healthy lifestyles by eating fruit regularly and attending weekly physical education and swimming sessions. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and display good social skills. Pupils become skilled at taking responsibility for aspects of school life. They contribute their ideas through the school council and work as playground leaders, helping to organise equipment. Pupils contribute to the wider community when they raise funds for charities and contribute harvest produce to those in need locally. They also understand how their actions can help to improve the environment when they study recycling.

Pupils develop very good spiritual awareness through regular acts of collective worship and they have a good knowledge of Christian traditions, and visit

local museums and a temple. However, their wider understanding of other cultures is less well developed because of insufficient attention in curriculum planning

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers now have thorough structured plans for English and mathematics in line with the school's action plan for improvement. Planning in science is similarly well organised. There is appropriate emphasis on the practical nature of science and pupils are given good opportunities to test their theories through experiments. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties receive an appropriate level of support. However, the most capable pupils are not usually provided with work that is challenging enough to help them to do their best. Classes are well resourced and good use is made of interactive whiteboards to support teaching. Informative displays are used very effectively to enhance the topics being taught.

There is no comprehensive system in place for assessing children's learning. The school's action plan identifies this as a priority. It has begun to address the issue and staff will receive training on assessment next term. Teachers evaluate their lessons regularly and many focus appropriately on what children have learnt. Targets are not used consistently to help all children focus on what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum provision is inadequate overall. The school has begun the process of developing a complete curriculum framework, but it is not yet in place. An effective structure has been established for English, mathematics, science and religious education (RE). There have been positive developments in science and RE since the last visit. The new programme for science provides useful guidance for teachers and includes clear information on how to measure pupils' progress. All pupils now have an RE lesson each week. The RE scheme combines carefully planned steps to develop skills and understanding within interesting topics. The use of the RE and science programmes is insufficiently consistent to enable all pupils to make good progress.

Pupils are offered an interesting range of after school activities including games, sports, music and library. Residential field trips, visits to places of interest, together with the effective use of specialist teaching in art and music lessons, all enhance the pupils' motivation.

The school provides a satisfactory level of guidance and support for pupils. There is a caring ethos. Pupils report they feel valued and can talk to an adult if they have a problem. There are opportunities for pupils to attend small withdrawal groups if they are feeling anxious or need help organising their work. Induction is very well organised with a 'nurture group' supporting new pupils who need help to settle in. Care is taken to ensure all pupils are

included in the life of the school. There are systems for recognising pupils' achievements, but these are not consistent across all classes.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are adequate overall, but not all procedures are recorded and available in a staff manual. Staff are aware of child protection procedures although few have had recent training. Individual programmes for pupils with learning difficulties are detailed and are supported by a good range of strategies. The school works effectively with other agencies to ensure pupils receive additional help when needed.

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

- improve the teaching, including assessment, and hence pupils' learning – satisfactory progress
- ensure that sufficient religious education is taught so that standards rise – satisfactory progress.

### **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school's self-evaluation form provides an accurate assessment of its performance. The headteacher has a thorough understanding of how he can lead and manage the school's improvement and is committed to raising standards. The thorough action plan identifies how this can be achieved. The pace of implementing the planned improvements lacks sufficient momentum in certain areas, such as curriculum planning and assessment. Since the last monitoring visit the governing body has undergone significant change, but governors are now becoming a well focused team. They have set up appropriate systems for monitoring improvement including a programme of visits to classes. The governors recognise the need to be more stringent in holding staff accountable for improving pupils' progress and raising standards.

The roles and responsibilities of subject leaders have been suitably clarified and developed more fully since inspectors last visited. Leaders often demonstrate a passion for their curriculum area. They work hard to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas, but are limited by the lack of an effective curriculum framework and coherent assessment structure. They provide clear guidance and arrange for appropriate additional support for staff. The coordinator for special educational needs has developed effective and useful systems for monitoring the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. She works well with teaching assistants to guide their work with pupils.

The school has carefully aligned improvement planning with financial planning and has forecast a balanced budget for the next financial year. The school has made good progress in developing its capacity to improve.

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

- improve the effectiveness of the governing body – satisfactory progress
- improve school development planning, linking this to financial planning – satisfactory progress.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing a good level of support through input from specialist advisers, consultants, leading teachers and advanced skills teachers. Good support and training has also been provided for governors. The core support group is monitoring the school's progress thoroughly. The school has wisely signed up to a course run by Plymouth University to improve its assessment and monitoring procedures.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Accelerate the pace of improvement
- develop teaching strategies to extend the most capable pupils
- set suitable and challenging targets for all pupils to enable them to make the best possible progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Wheeler  
**H M Inspector**