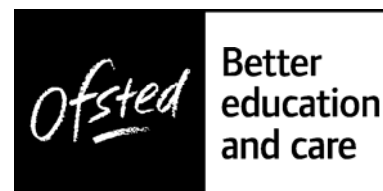


Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
0845 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



9 January 2006

Mrs Jan Hunt
St Margaret's C of E Primary School
School Close
Tintinhull
Yeovil
Somerset
BA22 8PX

Dear Mrs Hunt

SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST MARGARET'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Fiona Robinson, Additional Inspector, to your school on Friday 9 December 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 was found to have serious weaknesses in April 2005.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, subject coordinators, governors and the school's link inspector from the local authority (LA). Discussions were held with pupils during lessons.

Context

There are 90 pupils on roll. There has been an increase in the number of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual times of first admission or transfer to secondary school. The proportion of pupils who attend the school from outside the village has increased to 60%. A part time teacher was appointed in September 2005 to allow the headteacher time to implement the Ofsted action plan.

Achievement and standards

Results of the 2005 national tests in writing for pupils in Year 2 showed a significant improvement over those achieved in 2004. In Year 6 there was a significant improvement in English in the 2005 national tests. Whilst there was improvement at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and science, standards in these subjects remained exceptionally low and pupils' progress since Year 2 was inadequate.

Standards and provision in the Foundation Stage are good. Teaching is good and this allows children to make good progress in meeting the early learning goals at the end of the Reception year.

In Year 2 the standards observed during the visit in writing and mathematics were generally above average with none significantly below average. In writing, pupils make good progress, particularly in the key skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In mathematics, pupils' skills in mental arithmetic are good, with more able pupils achieving very high standards in the rapid recall of addition and subtraction facts. Their knowledge and understanding of two-dimensional shapes are good.

In Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average and pupils' progress is satisfactory. Standards in mathematics and science continue the trend of improvement seen in the 2005 national tests. In the lessons observed in Years 3 to 6 girls achieved more than boys because they worked harder and showed stronger levels of concentration. More able pupils do not achieve as well as they could because teaching does not challenge them sufficiently. Pupils' use and application of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) in other subjects are unsatisfactory. In Years 3 to 6, standards in ICT have not improved enough. There are still too many gaps in pupils' learning. Word processing skills are the best feature of pupils' work, with some work of good quality evident in the writing of stories on the theme of 'Creation'.

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

- raise standards and achievement in writing, mathematics, science and ICT – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. In lessons, pupils' behaviour is mainly good, especially where teaching motivates and excites them. When teaching is uninspiring the pupils, especially a minority of the boys, find it hard to concentrate and show immature behaviour. Pupils generally work hard in lessons and take care and pride in their work. Relationships are good especially when pupils take part in paired or group discussions.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils enjoy receiving awards and certificates. They know right from wrong and they form good relationships with each other and adults. Through a wide range of visits and visitors,

supported by the curriculum, pupils show a good understanding of their own and other cultures.

Pupils know the importance of keeping fit and healthy. Through the school council and taking part in the children's parliament at County Hall they develop a good idea of the democratic process. The improvement in pupils' progress in the key skills of reading, writing and number shows that they are becoming better prepared for their future contribution to society.

There were no issues in this area identified for improvement by the inspection in April 2005.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Half the teaching is good. However, there are variations in quality. Teaching is consistently good in the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, but weaker in Years 3 and 4. As a result some pupils are not doing as well as they should. More remains to be done to strengthen the overall quality of teaching, for example, planning for the needs of all pupils, especially the more able, in individual and group work.

In the best lessons, the teachers' expectations were high and lessons were well organised. Assessment was used effectively to match the pupils' tasks to their learning needs. There was a brisk pace to the learning and questions were used effectively to test the pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants are trained well and make a valuable contribution to raising standards.

In the weaker lessons teachers did not engage pupils, particularly boys, in their learning. Work was not sufficiently challenging nor demanding, resulting in loss of attention and interest. Assessment was used less effectively to plan the next steps in learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is generally well planned and is being monitored with increasing rigour. Interactive whiteboards are generally used well to motivate pupils and involve them in their learning especially in literacy and numeracy lessons. However, there is still room to improve pupils' use of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. The school provides well for health education and focuses on healthy eating. Pupils receive the recommended two hours of physical education each week.

The school offers pupils a good variety of additional activities which enhance the curriculum. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a good range of out of school activities.

Pupils are well cared for. Staff have a good knowledge of the social and emotional needs of pupils. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Pupils are taught about the importance of staying safe and adopting healthy

lifestyles. The school has satisfactory procedures to check on pupils' progress and it is using the data collected to raise standards.

There are rigorous child protection procedures in place and members of staff know what to do if they believe a child is at risk. There are good links with parents, carers and support agencies. Parents are pleased with the help children receive when they start school in the Reception year.

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

- address inconsistencies in teaching and increase the proportion of good or better lessons—satisfactory progress
- improve assessment procedures and the use of data in planning for pupils of different ages and abilities—satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides determined and effective leadership which is focusing on raising standards and lifting the pupils' achievement levels. She is firmly committed to further improvement and is sharing her vision effectively with staff. The headteacher, governors and staff work well as a team and are working hard to address areas of school improvement. Together they have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Monitoring has become more systematic and shows rigour. The roles of the subject leaders in English, mathematics and science have developed well with a consistent approach to improving provision and monitoring standards. Teachers are given helpful feedback about how to improve their work. Self-evaluation is becoming more focused on checking the impact of initiatives. In addition, the views of parents, pupils and staff are sought and acted on. Assessment information is used carefully to check the pupils' attainment levels and track their progress. This is beginning to have an impact on standards and is important to the school's vision for improvement. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Governors discharge their responsibilities well under the good leadership of the chair of the governing body. They are making sure that the school works hard to help the pupils succeed and achieve better standards in the future.

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

- in planning for the future have a sharper focus on raising standards—satisfactory progress
- continue to develop the role of subject leaders in the monitoring of teaching and learning, and in taking effective actions to bring about improvements—satisfactory progress.

External support

The LA is providing the school with a good degree of support. It has worked with staff and governors to establish the 'Core Group', members of which meet monthly to monitor progress against the areas for improvement. Literacy and numeracy consultants from the LA have provided good support in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The LA's statement of action is good.

Main Judgements

The school has made satisfactory progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses. This visit has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the school's performance will be monitored.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards in ICT and continue to raise standards in mathematics and science.
- Sharpen the focus on assessment to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.
- Improve the consistency of teaching in Years 3 to 6.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Chief Education Officer for Somerset.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis

Additional Inspector