

Suite 22 West Lancs
Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TN

T 01695 566930
F 01695 729320

Ofsted helpline
01695 566930



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Mrs S Warner
The Headteacher
Burton Bishop Wilson C of E (Aided) Primary School
Puddington Lane
Burton
Neston
Merseyside
CH64 5SE

Dear Mrs Warner

SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BURTON BISHOP WILSON CofE (AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 October 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 February 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

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the LA.

Context

In April 2005, the LA seconded an experienced headteacher to lead and manage the school until August 2006. The future of the school is under review as part of the LA's overall review of its educational provision.

Achievement and standards

The school's most recent test results are broadly similar to those in 2004, when standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 were above average and above the LA average for similar schools. The number of pupils in each group is small, so results must be treated with caution. In 2005, the pupils in Year 6 did not quite meet the targets set for them in English and mathematics at the expected level, because of the proportion of pupils who had extra learning needs. Pupils are well on their way to attaining the sensible targets set for 2006, which take into account the pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils enter the reception class with levels of attainment expected for their age and make good progress throughout the school. In the lessons seen, standards were above average in Year 2 and Year 6.

In information and communication technology, standards have improved so that in Year 6 they are broadly at the expected level. Pupils make good progress and build on their earlier skills because the quality of teaching is good and the curriculum provides plenty of opportunities to develop computer skills. Gaps in the pupils' knowledge and skills are being addressed methodically, although in Year 3 and Year 4, despite good teaching, the pupils are slow at using the keyboard and this holds back their progress. A good level of help from the LA has improved the leadership of the subject and increased the teachers' confidence in working with computers. Formal assessment has yet to be fully used in all classes.

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

- raise standards in information and communication technology in Year 3 to Year 6 – good progress.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is underpinned by strong Christian values and very good relationships. The pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are outstanding. The pupils very much enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the higher than average attendance. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle. It provides healthy snacks and meals and encourages exercise. Pupils contribute to the school community through taking responsibility for simple administrative tasks. School councillors are elected but have yet to hold their first meeting. Effective links to the local church broaden the pupils' understanding of how communities work. The good level of skills in literacy and numeracy, the increased use of computers and the ethos of working together for the good of all helps the pupils prepare for the world of work.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was good in five lessons seen and satisfactory in one. This is similar to the school's view of teaching. The rate of the pupils' learning mostly matched the quality of teaching. Common features in all teaching included clear

lesson objectives which were shared with the pupils. The teaching quickly engaged the pupils' interest and they thrived on practical tasks. Explanations were smart because of the teachers' command of the subjects they taught. Opportunities for the pupils to work in pairs and to discuss their learning added much to the interest and enjoyment. The effective deployment of teaching assistants enabled small groups of pupils, especially those who have extra learning needs or disabilities, to make good progress. Strong relationships were a hallmark of all the teaching. It was when the pace slowed down that teaching became satisfactory rather than good and as a result the challenge for higher attainers was insufficient.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The schemes of work take account of the mixed year groups in each class, although tasks are not always well matched to those pupils who learn quickly.

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is good and has improved since the last inspection. Arrangements for assessment are developing soundly and the teachers' use of day-to-day assessment is often good. A helpful system for tracking the pupils' progress is providing information which is used to set challenging targets for groups of pupils learning at similar levels. Staff and governors have received training in child protection and good systems are in place to ensure the pupils' wellbeing.

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

- improve procedures for child protection by agreeing a policy and training all staff – good progress.

Leadership and management

The school's action plan is satisfactory. It outlines a range of practical measures to address the areas for improvement. It is linked to the budget and includes key milestones when checks on progress can be made. Monitoring and evaluation have moved on since the plan was written and now much better underpin the work of the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and is used to set the agenda for improvement. The headteacher's monitoring of the quality of teaching is very good. The school is tackling the causes of serious weaknesses carefully and systematically. At the same time it is making sure that other aspects of provision improve and that the pupils achieve well. The budget, which has been in deficit for three years, is now in balance.

The successful leadership of the headteacher has inspired staff; morale has risen and a team spirit pervades. Training on roles and responsibilities for governors and subject leaders is helping most to fulfil their roles soundly. Nonetheless much relies on the headteacher and the school has yet to share the workload equably with other senior staff. The governors have ensured that statutory requirements are met. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

- improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels through systematic monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, teaching, learning and standards and use this to set priorities and plan for change – good progress
- meet statutory requirements for performance management and ensure that the prospectus contains all the information it should – good progress

External support

The LA provides a good level of support and training. Monitoring is clear and evaluation mostly succinct; this gives the school a clear agenda for improvement. The LA acted swiftly not only to second an experienced headteacher to lead and manage the school but to ensure that the appointment was of sufficient length to provide stability to the school's leadership. The part financing of an extra member of staff to allow the headteacher to concentrate on addressing the causes of serious weaknesses is very helpful. The LA's commentary is of good quality. The statement of action is satisfactory. Strengths are in the proposed actions but the responsibilities for the actions and for monitoring overlap inappropriately so that objectivity cannot be assured. The timescale is not always clear enough for the school to know precisely when support is to be given.

Main Judgements

The school has made good progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses.

Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen the role of senior staff.
- Ensure that high attainers are sufficiently challenged.

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

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Murphy

Additional Inspector