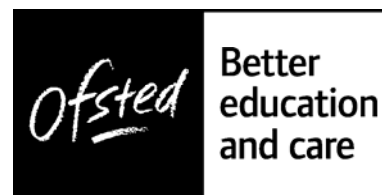


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17 November 2005

Mrs J Filtness
The Headteacher
Mengham Junior School
Palmerston Road
Hayling Island
Hampshire
PO11 9ET

Dear Mrs Filtness

SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MENGHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with John Earish, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 November, 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 inspected and found to have serious weaknesses in March 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 at work, including before and after school and during the lunch break; scrutinised documents; held discussions with you, two representatives of the governing body, a representative of the local education authority and the school council. We also examined a range of the pupils' work and spoke informally with teachers and other staff, pupils and some of the parents.

Context

The school serves a seaside town with a mixed economy including the leisure and hospitality industries, with some parents who take their holidays out of season and

during the school term. The percentage of the pupils entitled to a free school meal is average, but about 40 per cent have learning disabilities. There are 5 pupils (3% of the number on roll) from ethnic minorities and no pupils for whom English is not their first language. Overall attainment on entry to the school has been below the national average for the past few years.

The headteacher took up post in April 2003. In the two years before, there had been four head teachers. In the two years since, there has been a complete change in the teaching staff. The school now has stable staffing with a clear management structure and appropriate sharing of responsibilities. However, the number of pupils has fallen each year for the last four years. When the new headteacher introduced mixed age classes in response to budget pressures, some parents found places elsewhere. There is a full complement of governors; most of whom were appointed recently.

Achievement and standards

The inspectors' lesson observations focused on English, mathematics and science, and in all but one lesson, the pupils made satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress; but achieved standards below national expectations, especially in Years 5 and 6. Regular assessment shows that most of the pupils are now improving at the expected rate, but the improvement in attainment over the four years in school been below the national average. In 2005, the national test results improved on the previous year and were within four per cent of the agreed targets in English and mathematics with nearly one sixth of the pupils attaining the higher Level 5.

The standard of presentation of the pupils' work is satisfactory in Year 3 and 4, but below average in the upper years where there is too much poor handwriting.

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

- Raise standards, especially in English, mathematics and science—satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' personal development is good. Attendance was below the national average, but has been a focus of attention and is now close to national expectations. The pupils show positive attitudes to learning, behave well and say they enjoy school. Their relationships with each other and staff are good, reflecting the strong emphasis the school places on their personal development. The school council represents the views of pupils very effectively and has suggested changes, such as improvements to the school grounds, which have been implemented. This is helping the pupils to develop a good understanding of democratic principles and equipping them with skills and qualities for working roles. The pupils say that they feel safe in school and have someone they can go to if they have anxieties or concerns. They are confident that the adults will deal quickly with any bullying. The school makes good use of outside agencies to provide help and support for its vulnerable pupils.

Pupils have a good awareness of what it means to have a healthy lifestyle and to keep safe.

No areas for improvement were identified by the inspection in March 2005.

Quality of provision

Consistent with the school's own evaluation, the quality of the teaching seen was satisfactory overall. Twelve part lessons were observed; in six the teaching was good, in five satisfactory, but in one it was inadequate. Teaching in the Year 3/4 classes was predominantly good. Most lessons were well planned and took account of the needs of different groups. Where there were weaknesses, it was in planning to meet the needs of the Year 6 pupils in the mixed Year 5/6 classes.

In the better lessons the pupils knew what they were expected to learn and the teachers used questioning well to evaluate gains in understanding. The teachers used resources well to engage and maintain the pupils' interest. The pupils had useful opportunities to discuss their learning with each other and applied themselves to tasks with good levels of concentration. In the other lessons, activities did not always engage the interest of learners and some pupils were not sufficiently challenged. Most teachers provide useful comments in their marking.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities continue to be well supported. Learning support assistants are used effectively, especially in helping with groups of the pupils needing additional support. The school makes good provision for the range of needs in the Year 3/4 classes, but in the mixed Year 5/6 classes some of the work seen was not sufficiently demanding, especially for the Year 6 pupils, or matched well enough to individual needs

The range of subjects and other activities provides a good balance of interest and learning. Monitoring of the teaching and learning has improved since the inspection. A more systematic approach to lesson planning has been introduced in English, mathematics and science, but procedures for the regular and methodical monitoring of this planning are still being developed.

The school cares well for its pupils, and deals effectively with any incidents of bullying or misbehaviour. It is also successful in developing the pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and personal safety. For instance, the importance of a healthy diet is reinforced by the well-balanced school meals on offer. The pupils have a good understanding of potential hazards at home and awareness of 'stranger danger' through the Junior Citizen initiative. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good and all adults understand the child protection procedures.

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

- Tackle the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by establishing clear expectations for lesson planning and evaluating how well pupils are doing,

as well as ensuring that there is a consistent level of challenge – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The school's improvement plan is comprehensive and focused clearly on the areas of serious weakness. The actions already taken have improved the overall quality of the teaching, given more structure to planning and are beginning to raise standards. The impact of these actions is most evident in the replacement of teaching staff and the reallocation of responsibilities. The governors have produced an excellent time-line against which they judge progress and monitor improvements. It has demanding targets and dates and each governor has a clearly defined responsibility.

The school's self evaluation procedures and statements are good and accurately reflect the current status of important aspects of the school's life. There is a good capacity for continuing improvement. The governors, headteacher and local authority (LEA) link adviser have worked very well together to bring about change and improvement. The headteacher's understanding of the school's strengths, weaknesses and needs is based on good evaluation of evidence, including monitoring of teaching and learning, analysis of test results and using good LEA support and the commitment of the governing body. Subject leadership, only recently restructured, is developing satisfactorily. The teachers are accepting responsibility and, increasingly, accountability. The headteacher's judgement, shared by the LEA and the governors, that improvement since the March 2005 inspection has been good, is realistic and accurate. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good.

No areas for improvement were identified by the inspection in March 2005.

External support

The LEA's statement of action is focussed clearly and accurately on the weaknesses already recognised when identified in the inspection report. The link inspector and specialist subject advisers have been giving considerable support and assistance and there are regular meetings to monitor progress. The impact of this support is beginning to improve planning, teaching and learning. An advanced skills teacher from a neighbouring school has been giving good help in establishing the computer suite and schemes of work in information and communication technology (ICT).

Main Judgements

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

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve and refine systems for assessing the learning needs of individual pupils and make provision accordingly;

- In Years 5 and 6 establish clear timelines to ensure coverage of all necessary topics, especially in English, mathematics and science, and the acquisition, as far as possible, of the necessary skills and understanding.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the joint chairs of governors and the Director of children's services, Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Michael Pipes
Additional Inspector