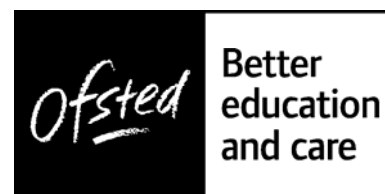


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06 December 2005

The Headteacher
Deepcar St John's Church of England Junior School
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Dear Mr Rogers

**SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF DEEPCAR ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND JUNIOR SCHOOL
INSPECTION NO 283339**

Introduction

Following my visit with Joan McKenna Additional Inspector to your school on 5 and 6 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 May 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 and staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. A total of 13 lessons or part lessons, two assemblies and two registrations were observed. Pupils were observed at lunchtime and break times.

Context

Since the inspection in May 2005, the deputy headteacher, who taught Year 6, has resigned. An assistant headteacher, who also teaches in Year 4 part-time, was appointed to strengthen the senior management of the school. There are plans to appoint two more members of staff in the near future. The number of pupils on roll

has fallen within the last three years; this is a reflection of the population in the local area.

Achievement and standards

The school's confidence that standards would improve from the 2005 national test results is well founded. Results for the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in 2005 showed that there was underachievement for all pupils in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' progress in mathematics was particularly slow. Standards and pupils' achievement have improved since then. Teaching and learning are better and there are clear strategies to improve standards. Most pupils are achieving satisfactorily and standards are just above average.

Staff are becoming more consistent and successful at setting precise targets for improvement. Expectations and the challenges set are realistic and achievable. The teachers are making better use of school data to maximise the achievement of all groups across the school. More rigorous monitoring and target setting is having a positive impact on raising standards. Because the staff have a clearer idea of how to improve standards because of the high quality in-service training they have received, they now have the tools to raise standards. Predicted targets are now set for all pupils in relation to their abilities. These targets help teachers plan work to meet pupils' learning needs. Because pupils' performance is reviewed frequently, underachievement is spotted quickly. Intervention programmes for literacy and numeracy are put into place to enable pupils to catch up on their learning. The Springboard intervention programme in mathematics, for example, as well as the higher expectations set in lesson planning is having a positive impact on raising standards. Most weaknesses in teaching have been corrected, particularly in mathematics such as greater emphasis on problem solving. Consequently, most pupils are doing better than previously.

However, there is still variation in how well teachers plan to meet the needs of the higher attaining pupils. Some higher attaining pupils are still insufficiently challenged in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' progress in one Year 6 class has been hampered by several changes of staff within the last term and by past underachievement. This has had a negative impact but pupils are now getting back on course to meet the targets set for them.

Judgement

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6, partly by ensuring that higher attainers are consistently set challenging work – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils like school and most have good attitudes towards their work. They do what is asked of them and are keen to please their teachers. Pupils have positive relationships with each other and with adults. They are very pleased with the new procedures to promote good behaviour and during the monitoring visit the vast majority of pupils behaved well both in lessons and around the school. The unsatisfactory behaviour of a significant minority of pupils seen at the last inspection was not evident, although it is clear that a small number still have some problems. In a few lessons pupils became a little restless and, while not misbehaving, they began to show some lack of concentration. This was either when the teachers did not exert firm control, or when work was not interesting enough or was too complex. When asked, one pupil commented 'we like work when it is challenging'. The action being taken to ensure that all pupils behave well and to prevent bullying contributes to pupils feeling safe and secure within school, and being confident that adults care about their well-being. A typical comment is 'bullying is banned in this school'. Pupils show concern towards each other and their environment by some taking on responsibilities such as holding doors open at break time and litter picking. Pupils' attendance at school is good, considerably above the national average, another indicator that they enjoy coming to school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good teaching and some that is inadequate. In 13 lessons observed it was good in eight, satisfactory in three lessons and inadequate in two. The school's view of teaching and learning is closely aligned to the judgements made by inspectors.

In most lessons pupils were managed well, relationships were good and most pupils responded positively. Teaching assistants give good support to the lower attaining pupils and target groups, helping them to learn effectively. Planning and target setting are now much more consistent and of good quality. When planning is matched well to the needs of all pupils, they are on track to achieve the targets set and teaching and learning is good. However, at times, planning does not meet the needs of all pupils sufficiently well, particularly the higher attaining. Although the school's marking policy is good all teachers do not apply it consistently. Some pupils know well what their targets are and how to improve. In other classes, marking, although it praises pupils' hard work, does not tell pupils what to do next to improve their work.

In the best lessons, learning is interesting and fun. Teachers use a range of methods and resources to motivate pupils and keep them on task. They question pupils well to ascertain their learning and extend their thinking. Work is well planned to meet their individual needs.

Presentation of work in books is generally good. Much of the work is completed on time and books are looked after with pride. However, there is insufficient work devoted to developing recording skills that will help pupils reach high standards.

Pupils do not get sufficient practice in devising and solving problems in mathematics. Investigative work is encouraged in science but pupils do not always get sufficient time to write their evaluations and conclusions. In English, pupils do not often get enough practice in writing imaginatively at length.

The school has recently implemented systems for assessing pupils and tracking their progress. It is too soon to gauge the impact of this work. The school is providing a suitably broad curriculum, with an appropriate emphasis on promoting the basic skills of English and mathematics. Use of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved and is now satisfactory. Interactive whiteboards are used well in many classrooms and are popular with pupils, stimulating greater interest and involvement in their learning.

Following consultation with staff, parents and pupils, the school has very recently adopted good procedures for promoting consistent behaviour management. These are being followed well by staff, and are already reported to be having a positive impact. Appropriate action is being taken to raise awareness of bullying and prevent its occurrence, with a 'Beat the Bully' representative in each class and a box for anonymous reporting of incidents. Pupils report that 'there is always someone they can go to if there is a problem'.

Pupils' personal and specific needs are met well. Procedures to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are thorough. A wide range of intervention strategies is implemented to help pupils make progress. Child protection and health and safety procedures are secure.

Judgement

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is more consistently high across the school – satisfactory progress
- Develop consistent strategies to successfully manage the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has set a clear and effective agenda for school improvement. Morale is high and staff work together well to achieve school aims and priorities. The senior leadership team has been reformed and strengthened with the appointment of an assistant headteacher this term. They meet regularly and are proving to be a positive force for improvement. There is a shared understanding of how weaknesses are to be tackled.

The quality of self-evaluation is much improved and is now satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning is extensive and enables staff to see what needs to be done

to improve the quality of their work. There is a good quality action plan in place, which is sufficiently rigorous and detailed to measure improvement in pupils' achievement. Because the systems for tracking pupils' performance are improved, the senior leadership team are able to gain a better overview of trends and the performance of individuals and groups of pupils' more efficiently and accurately and set targets for improvement. This is having a positive impact in raising the quality of teaching and learning. However, there is still room for improvement in the effectiveness of monitoring where teaching is only satisfactory or where it is inadequate.

Managers are increasingly effective in their roles. The subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology monitor and know their subjects well. They have good subject knowledge and have written rigorous action plans, which are helping to correct any weaknesses, identified. In mathematics, the emphasis on setting targets, problem solving work and mathematics in other subjects is helping to improve standards. Strategies for subject leaders such as joint monitoring observations of teaching with local advisory staff, in-service professional development and looking at pupils work has increased their professional competence. However, as yet it is too soon to judge the full impact of their work.

Judgement

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

- Improve the quality of leadership – satisfactory progress;
- Significantly improve the quality of school self-evaluation – satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have responded positively when approached for support. The school has appreciated and taken on board the help offered. Advisers and consultants have worked side by side with subject leaders to pinpoint and monitor the crucial areas to improve. As a result of a focused and well ordered approach to raising standards staff and pupils are benefiting from better quality teaching and learning. Plans to eradicate weaknesses and drive up standards have been incorporated into a good quality plan and programme for improvement which is scheduled for this and next year.

Judgement - good

Main Judgements

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

Priorities for further improvement

- Provide more challenge in English, mathematics and science lessons to meet the needs of the higher attaining pupils.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Young People's Services in Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Dawson
Additional Inspector