

14 December 2005

Mr Peter Gerrish
Associate Headteacher
Royles Brook Primary School
Marsh Road
Thornton Cleveleys
Lancashire
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Dear Mr Gerrish

SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ROYLES BROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Lynne Read and Jennie Platt Additional Inspectors to your school on 12 and 13 December, 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 associate headteacher, associate deputy headteacher, the chair and vice chair of governors, a group of Year 6 pupils, a representative from the local authority (LA) and subject leaders for literacy, numeracy, the Foundation Stage and personal, social and health education.

Context

Following the long term absence and recent resignation of the previous headteacher and deputy headteacher, the school has appointed temporary associates for the current school year until permanent appointments can be made for September 2006.

Achievement and standards

Children start school into the reception class, with levels of attainment that are above that typical of most children at this age. The children are confident talkers and good listeners and enjoy joining in with favourite songs. However, they do not

make enough progress during the year, so by the time they start in Year 1, standards are below the local authority averages in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. They are above average in personal, social and emotional development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development.

The results of the 2005 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 were well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. Results in the national tests by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2005 were below the national average in English, mathematics and science and achievement was inadequate. These results reflect the inadequate teaching in Key Stage 2, identified in the previous inspection.

Progress in lessons is satisfactory, with good progress in some classes. Good progress is characterised by the high expectations and challenge provided in effective teaching. Progress in some aspects of provision in the reception class is only satisfactory due to low expectations that do not build well enough on prior learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Personal development and well-being are good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are polite, courteous and keen to succeed. They feel safe in school, confident that they will be supported by staff and their friends, should any difficulties occur. Pupils say their confidence and self-esteem has improved since their responsibilities have been increased. There have been good improvements in pupils' personal development because teachers have developed a more consistent policy and approach towards behaviour management. Pupils say that they are encouraged to consider the effects of their actions on others and that this is a key factor in preventing incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Bullying is not a problem in school. A valued system of rewards underpins good actions, hard work and the good rate of attendance.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school has made sound improvements to developing pupils' understanding of the multicultural nature of society. One new initiative includes links with pupils from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils have a good understanding of the differences between right and wrong and have good self-discipline. The range of jobs allocated around school helps them to gain useful insights into the world of work. The school council ensures a strong voice for pupils and enables them to take part in decision making. Pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles, and readily accept the school's encouragement to eat healthily and take regular exercise.

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

- improve the immature behaviour and attitudes of older pupils and provide better opportunities for all pupils to contribute to the life of the school – good progress

- raise pupils' awareness of the range and diversity of cultures in Britain today – satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good features throughout the school which is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have benefited from the effective support provided by the local authority literacy and numeracy consultants and the high priority given to checking teaching and learning by the associate headteacher this term. Strengths of the good teaching included good deployment of the teaching assistants, clear expectations and instructions that helped pupils to learn effectively. The recently installed interactive whiteboards are used well in a small number of classes. Pupils demonstrated good attitudes to learning and a keen interest in most classes.

There are weaknesses in teaching, many of which are related to lack of subject knowledge, especially in literacy. Learning outcomes are not always displayed or included in planning for pupils to know what is expected of them. Sometimes, they are too difficult for pupils to understand or there are too many. The pace in lessons can be too slow and pupils are not involved sufficiently in the whole class sessions. While provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory overall, there is too little opportunity for the children to take responsibility and to develop independence. Expectations are too low and there is an over use of worksheets in the Foundation Stage. Children are provided with too few opportunities to develop writing skills.

Assessment arrangements have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. The school tracks pupils' progress from entry to Year 6 through a range of tests and assessments. This helps teachers plan lessons more closely linked to pupils' ability and also to provide extra help when needed. The school has made a start on setting literacy and numeracy targets for each class and these are often on display. Some pupils do have individual targets to involve them more in their own learning, but this is inconsistent throughout the school. Marking of work is carried out regularly and teachers often include positive comments to encourage pupils to improve. However, few comments give clear guidance on how to improve work. The school has started to review assessment procedures in non-core subjects. Staff have guidance notes on what is expected at each level although as yet the assessment of progress in subjects other than literacy and numeracy is not firmly established. Assessment of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. They have specific targets linked to their needs and also evaluate their own progress and say what they want to improve and this enables them to reach the targets set for them.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and eliminate the underachievement in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory progress

- complete the work on assessment in all subjects and use the information effectively to plan work that matches the pupils' different levels of capability – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. A high priority has been given to checking the quality of teaching and learning, lesson planning, scrutinising pupils' work and analysing test results. The associate headteacher is well supported by the temporary deputy headteacher, who leads effectively by the example of her good teaching. Pupils hold them in high regard, saying that 'they have brought the life back into school'. The action plan is a realistic and workable plan of action that provides a clear steer for improvement. Support from the local authority for subject leaders has been good, but is yet to have marked impact: the leadership team are aware there are still areas for development in this aspect of the school's work, especially in the Foundation Stage, mathematics and science. Governors are fully involved in checking the impact of the changes. Under the current leadership, the school has a good capacity to improve.

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

- train and empower the co-ordinators to lead and manage their subjects properly – satisfactory progress

External support

The local authority, through the school evaluation group comprising the local authority, governors, headteacher and deputy, have met half termly to report on progress on the action plan. This group provides all stakeholders with detailed feedback on the monitoring and evaluation provided to the school. As a result, governors are very well informed. The local authority statement of action is good. It mirrors the governors' action plan effectively. The targets to secure improvements are realistic and very appropriate. Support by the literacy and numeracy consultants has been exemplary.

Main Judgements

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

Priorities for further improvement

- continue to improve the teaching and learning in those classes where it is only satisfactory
- improve the provision for children in the Foundation Stage by offering a wider range of activities to encourage independence in all areas of learning, especially early writing skills.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Standards of Lancashire LEA.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rodger
Additional Inspector