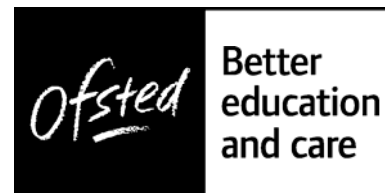


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31 October 2005

Mrs M Papworth  
The Headteacher  
Fiskerton CE Primary School  
Ferry Road  
Fiskerton  
Lincolnshire  
LN3 4HU

Dear Mrs Papworth

## **SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF FISKERTON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit to your school on 10 and 11 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.

### **Evidence**

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

### **Context**

This is the second time the school has been identified as having serious weaknesses in the past three years. Since the Small Schools' Best Value Report, 2003, the school initiated, and is continuing to develop, a formal collaboration with a nearby, successful Primary School. The local education authority supports this initiative intended to raise the standards of provision and achievement. Pupil numbers continue to decline and this is the predicted pattern for the future.

## **Achievement and standards**

There are few pupils and considerable turnover in each year-group, and consequently results tend to fluctuate from year to year. Nevertheless, there has been a declining trend at both key stages, with results overall below the national average, particularly at Key Stage 2. The results in 2005 were better at Key Stage 1, where all pupils reached the expected level apart from in writing, but the picture was not as strong at the higher level. Results at Key Stage 2 were again below the national average.

The pupils presently in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 are working overall at the level expected for their age and are making adequate progress in English, mathematics and science. Standards in Years 5 and 6, however, are well below those expected and few pupils are approaching the levels expected for their age. The school's own assessments and the pupils' work demonstrate that these pupils have made insufficient progress since they were in Year 2. The oldest pupils have particular weaknesses with spelling, punctuation and the use of interesting vocabulary and they do not calculate rapidly enough with the four rules of number. Their work is poorly presented. The development of their writing skills is hampered by an over-use of worksheets and too few opportunities to use and develop their skills across the curriculum.

## **Personal development and well-being**

The school continues to work hard to ensure that the pupils behave well and that they are quiet and attentive in class. The behaviour policy is applied consistently and the pupils are confident that there is someone they can turn to when necessary. Relationships between pupils and with adults are good and there have been no recent exclusions. The school takes good care of its pupils and they feel safe. Their attitudes to work are satisfactory; although they enjoy being in school, the pupils are not always enthusiastic about their lessons and some say they find some of the work rather easy. Because they often work in small groups with a supervising adult, the pupils do not develop their independence sufficiently, and the older pupils have few responsibilities. They have a sound understanding of a healthy lifestyle. Rates of attendance are significantly affected by the absences of individual pupils, but are satisfactory overall.

## **Quality of provision**

Teaching and learning are adequate throughout the school. Classrooms are quiet and orderly places; most pupils are attentive and concentrate on their work. Because discipline is good, lessons proceed in an undisturbed way. Where the teaching is better, there is a strong and well-organised start to the lesson, with brisk and focused teaching and arrangements that accommodate all the year-groups. The

teaching is lively and interesting, involving the pupils and developing their confidence.

The teachers keep detailed assessments of the progress being made and marking in English and mathematics often identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the work. However, these assessments are not being sufficiently used to plan further lessons, and in some instances pupils who have found work easy are required to do more of a similar level. Some year-groups are given the same work although they are not at the same level. In other instances, pupils of different ages are taught at the same level, even though their rates of progress may be different. Consequently, although those with special educational needs have sound support, progress for some is not as rapid as it could be. The school is at a very early stage in using target-setting to involve the pupils in their own learning and consequently they do not have a clear enough idea of how they can improve their own work.

Teachers usually tell pupils what they are to do in lessons and these intentions are displayed in the classroom. However, they are often the activity the pupils are to undertake rather than what they are to learn. The teaching assistants make a satisfactory contribution to work of the groups and individuals to whom they are assigned and have mostly made sound preparations for what they are to do. However, there are many adults in each class, and some pupils have few opportunities to work on their own. Occasionally, there are too many adults with a small group. The teaching assistants rarely have a purposeful role during the beginning and end of lessons.

The school has made some strides in developing the curriculum to cater for the wide range of age and ability in each class and there is now clear guidance on what topics are to be taught to each age-range. This is a difficult project, given the very low numbers in each group. However, the guidance to teachers is limited, particularly about which skills are to be developed in each group, and how cross-curricular work is to be approached. The framework does not give sufficient information about how the Foundation Stage curriculum is to be linked with that for Key Stage 1. Although the adult-directed activities are satisfactory, the independent activities provided for these children are rather limited in range and focus.

### Judgement

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

- Make sure that pupils have work that is appropriate to their age and ability in subjects other than English and mathematics.

The school has made some progress in addressing this area for improvement, but is at an early stage in planning an adequate curriculum.

- Better involve the pupils in their learning by making it clear to them what they are expected to learn

Although some progress is evident, it is not yet sufficient.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher has worked hard to eradicate some of the school's shortcomings, particularly in behaviour and attitudes. Nevertheless, leadership and management are not sufficiently effective in providing a clear direction for the school and taking determined action to bring about the necessary improvements. More time has been allocated for management and the headteacher has used this to develop monitoring procedures, so that lessons have been observed and work and planning scrutinised, along with discussions with pupils. However, this monitoring has not been sufficiently rigorous, so that there has been too little clarity about what the key areas of strength and weakness are. The actions that have been carried out, such as the curriculum planning, have been at a rather superficial level. Other staff have not been sufficiently involved in the evaluation process. There is a tendency to blame the past and the pupils for the school's situation rather than pinpointing with accuracy where improvement is needed. Consequently, the school has an over-optimistic view of its own effectiveness.

The school's action plan provides a satisfactory basis for bringing about the required improvements. The proposed actions are suitable and show a sense of urgency. However, the timings are not specific enough and the arrangements for monitoring and evaluation do not show clearly enough how these are to be carried out. School improvement planning is weaker; it does not tackle the school's priorities with sufficient clarity about what is to be done, particularly in order to raise standards. The success criteria are not focused sufficiently on the standards the pupils are to attain.

### Judgement

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

- Ensure that the arrangements for management provide adequate opportunities to monitor the curriculum and the progress pupils make.

Time has been provided for monitoring but the impact of the strategies has been limited.

## **External support**

The local education authority has had concerns about the school for some time and suitable support has been provided significant support over some years, since before the school was first identified as having serious weaknesses. Some impact is evident but mainly at a superficial level because the advice has not been understood. The LEA's statement is a satisfactory basis for action. The actions proposed by the LEA are appropriate and arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the progress being made are satisfactory. External partners are identified and there is an assessment of the scope for the school to be closed.

The collaboration with a successful neighbouring school and its provision of support has considerable potential. The headteacher of that school is realistic about the improvements necessary and has appropriate plans to help Fiskerton School to develop.

### **Main Judgements**

This visit has raised serious concerns about the progress being made and the leadership and management of the school, which has not demonstrated a capacity to improve. I am recommending a return visit.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision
- Clear and urgent plans to remedy shortcomings and build on strengths
- The development of assessment, tracking and target-setting to support teaching and learning
- The development of the curriculum showing the skills to be developed in each year-group

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the diocese and the Director of Education for Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Mrs P C Cox  
**Additional Inspector**