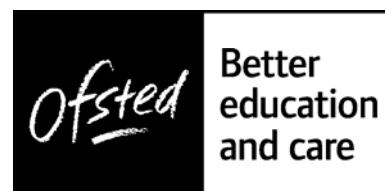


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5 January 2005

Mrs G Young
The Headteacher
St Andrew's C of E Primary School
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Dear Mrs Young

SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST ANDREW'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 December 2005, with my two colleagues Dr. Anna Coyle and Mrs Ruth Frith, Additional Inspectors, 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, talked with pupils, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, nominated staff, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection there has been a significant reorganisation of the class and year group structure throughout Key Stage 2 to create three parallel mixed-age classes across Years 3 and 4, and across Years 5 and 6. Setting for English and mathematics has also been introduced in Key Stage 2.

Achievement and standards

Pupils make inadequate progress overall. The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2005 show that the progress pupils make throughout Key Stage 2 is well below that of other schools and close to the bottom 5% of schools nationally. This has changed little over the last three years. Test results are close to average in science but well below in mathematics. The school achieved its overall targets for English and science at the end of Year 6; however, it was well below its target for mathematics. In English, writing remains a significant weakness. While pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities make sound progress, higher attaining pupils do not. Too few pupils achieve the higher Level 5 in any subject. Many fewer pupils than forecast attained the higher level in English, particularly in writing, where only 1 pupil out of 44 attained Level 5, and in mathematics where only 10 did so: both well below the school's target. Results in science were much better and the targets were achieved at Level 4 and Level 5.

Current standards in Year 6 in English are below average. Writing remains a weakness. A high proportion of pupils are working at the lower levels and will require significant support to reach the expected level by the end of Year 6. Handwriting and presentation across the school are weak. Pupils do not have a good grasp of common spelling rules and their use of punctuation is inadequate.

In mathematics, standards remain very low. Many pupils lack basic numeracy skills and few have a good knowledge, or rapid recall, of tables and number bonds. Expectations of the quantity of work completed and the quality of presentation in many classes is unsatisfactory. There are many examples of unfinished work and work that is spoiled by heavy crossing out or where lines or mathematical figures are drawn freehand. This detracts from the quality and the value placed on the work.

Pupils made satisfactory progress in most lessons, in line with the quality of teaching. However, higher attaining pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are not stretched enough. As a consequence their rate of progress is slower than it should be. Children in Reception show good application to their tasks, achieve well and make good progress.

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

- Raise the achievement of all pupils, particularly those of higher attainment – inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development, well-being and behaviour are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school and want to learn, but in a significant minority of lessons a few older pupils are inattentive and consequently effect their own learning and the learning of others. In contrast, children in Reception are keen to learn and concentrate well because the activities are well matched to their needs and abilities. Their behaviour

is generally good because they are too interested in what they are doing to waste time or misbehave. While in many lessons pupils respond well to the strategies used to maintain good behaviour, in others, a few pupils show a lack of respect for adults.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils get on with each other reasonably well and relationships overall are satisfactory. The election of pupils to the class councils gives opportunities for them to take part in a democratic process. Members of the school council enjoy the responsibilities placed upon them to represent the views of their class and make sensible suggestions for improving aspects of the school.

The school has worked well to raise the levels of attendance, which are now in line with the national averages. Pupils are aware of the importance of coming to school regularly and on time and respond well to the incentives for good attendance. Parents are aware that holidays should not be taken in school time but some continue to do so.

Pupils receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Most pupils feel safe and know whom to go to if they have problems. They know they will be listened to but think, on occasions, that the issues raised, such as unsatisfactory behaviour, are not fully followed through by staff. They are encouraged to think about the feelings of others and show respect through the personal, social and health education programme but a few are unable to transfer what they learn here to their own behaviour and attitudes. Pupils who have learning disabilities are well supported.

Recent developments in target setting have given pupils a clearer idea of what is expected of them and what they need to do to improve.

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

- Raise attendance to at least the national average – good progress.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. However, with only around one third of the teaching observed being of good quality, this is not enough to make the improvements needed and raise attainment more rapidly. Most teachers plan lesson activities carefully to make sure that learning is enjoyable. They deploy teaching assistants well and make good use of interactive whiteboards to aid learning where they have them.

Teaching is consistently good in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 and 2, the teachers expect their pupils to behave well and they focus suitably on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. In Years 3 to 6, the positive relationships between teachers and pupils have a positive effect on learning because most pupils are eager to please and try hard to reach their targets. For example, in a good English lesson with Year 6, pupils worked diligently as a result of the teacher's good rapport with them. However, teaching and learning are occasionally inadequate

when the pace of learning is too slow and lessons are not planned precisely enough to meet the different needs and abilities of pupils. This leads to a lack of progress amongst some groups of pupils, especially the most capable. Teachers have improved their marking of work and the majority provide useful comments to help pupils know what they need to do to improve, but this is not yet consistent throughout the school. The setting of pupils by ability for English and mathematics is beginning to have a positive impact on standards.

Assessment is satisfactory. The school has made reasonable progress in developing its procedures since the last inspection, including the setting of targets for pupils. The systems in place to evaluate and track pupils' attainment are becoming more sophisticated but are not yet used well enough to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The school makes satisfactory provision for the curriculum. It teaches all subjects of the National Curriculum in Years 1 to 6 and a few links are being forged between subjects as teachers develop their planning to incorporate cross-curricular themes. A suitable programme for personal, social and health education helps pupils to find out how to stay safe and healthy, and prepares them for life as an adult. Individual education plans for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are detailed and learning support staff use them well to guide pupils' learning.

A sound range of after-school activities has a positive impact on learning. Opportunities for football, netball, gym, drama, art and French enhance pupils' enjoyment and achievement beyond the classroom.

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

- Make full use of assessment data to track and carefully monitor the progress of all pupils – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. There is now a clearer focus on raising standards. Subject leaders are developing an understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have been well supported by local authority consultants. However, improvements are at an early stage and they do not yet have sufficient knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment or the curriculum across the school. Subject leaders' action plans need further development to enable sharper analysis and evaluation and ensure a clear link with the school's overall improvement plan.

There is now a whole-school focus on raising standards and developing more consistent approaches. Staff have taken on the year group reorganisation well and there is a greater sense of purpose about the school. Procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the school are developing and there are reliable systems in place to

track pupils' attainment. Monitoring of teaching is regular but needs to develop greater rigour to enable the pace of change to be speeded up. There is not yet a strong enough focus on evaluating learning.

The governing body has developed a more effective structure. Regular meetings and monitoring reports on the progress of the action plan and visits to school by individual governors enable the governing body to gather information for itself. The governors now have a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They need to consolidate this so they have secure strategies for evaluating both the school's work and their own effectiveness.

The school's action plan is satisfactory. Its format makes for ease of monitoring and evaluation by clearly setting out each of the improvements needed, identifying the resources needed and the timescale. It identifies the responsible person, clear measurable success criteria and the processes for evaluating progress. The school's self-evaluation of progress to date is satisfactory and gives evidence as to the steps taken, although it is often too descriptive and there is not enough on the impact of the actions.

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

- Urgently improve the quality of leadership provided by the headteacher – satisfactory progress.
- Develop and implement a clear, concise and well prioritised plan for improvement – satisfactory progress.
- Improve the role of the governing body in holding the school to account for the standards achieved – satisfactory progress.
- Empower subject coordinators to carry out their roles effectively – satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority's statement of action is good. The commentary clearly outlines the action it intends to take, the resources needed, a clear timescale and success criteria to address the areas of weakness. Through monitoring and review, practical advice on teaching and learning, planning and general management, the local authority has provided good support since the inspection in line with its stated action plan. This support will continue to be given for the foreseeable future.

Main Judgements

The school has made satisfactory progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses. This visit has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the school's performance will be monitored..

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise pupils' attainment and rate of progress in English and mathematics across the school with some urgency.
- Improve the proportion of good teaching.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of marking.
- Improve subject leaders' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding across the school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, The Director of Education for Essex and the Diocese of Chelmsford.

Yours sincerely

John Francis

Additional Inspector