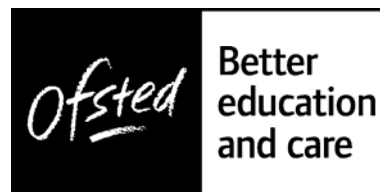


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Mrs L Schneidereit
The Headteacher
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1 March 2006

Dear Mrs Schneidereit

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CRANFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Anne Johns, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 February 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher and subject leaders. In addition, there were meetings with school governors and a representative of the local authority (LA).

Context

Staffing and pupil numbers remain unchanged since the first monitoring inspection. The school has had a relatively short period of approximately eight weeks since the last visit.

Achievement and standards

The pupils attending the school make satisfactory progress overall. Internal assessment information collected by the school very recently indicates that progress is improving in numeracy, where 82% of the pupils reached the targets the school set for them. Analysis of the recently administered mid-year assessments in reading and writing was underway at the time of the visit.

In 2005 the pupils in Years 2 and 6 reached above average standards in English, mathematics and science, with a good proportion reaching the higher level in reading in Year 2 and in English and science in Year 6. Standards in the present Year 6 are not as high due to the nature of that particular group of pupils. Internal assessment information indicates that these pupils are on line to reach broadly average standards. The school is setting appropriately challenging targets for the future. The staff are beginning to use the information they have to identify groups and individuals who could be doing better. As yet, however, they are not rigorously measuring the effectiveness of this additional support to ensure these pupils quickly catch up in their work. In one class the teacher is not well informed enough about the work that is covered and the progress pupils are making when they are taken out of the class to receive additional help.

The improved resources for information and communication technology (ICT) are having a positive impact on progress and standards in ICT. The pupils in Class 1 are making particularly good progress and demonstrate confidence when using a digital camera and computers to produce pictures of their models.

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

- raise attainment and achievement, by giving priority to English, mathematics, science and ICT—satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

The school continues to provide well for the personal development of the pupils. Behaviour is good and the pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They attend regularly and generally participate enthusiastically in lessons. Relationships between the staff and the pupils continue to be good. The pupils enjoy school and speak confidently to visitors about their work and play. Pupils are encouraged to use their initiative. For example, two pupils recently established and publicised a 'Buddy Bench' in the playground for others to use when they are feeling lonely. Pupils are aware of the need for exercise and most bring healthy food to school in their lunch boxes. They regularly collect for local and national charities and the school plays an active part in the life of the village. The recently developed 'Cranford Jotter' provides

good opportunities to celebrate the achievements of the pupils and in doing so promotes self esteem and confidence.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. School assemblies are thoughtful, reflective occasions which celebrate the ethos of the school and enhance the pupils' spiritual development. The pupils' understanding of life in an ethnically diverse society remains more limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. All teachers were seen twice during the visit, including two paired observations with the headteacher.

When teaching is most successful it is clearly focused on motivating pupils to learn and make progress. In these lessons the planning takes good account of the range of abilities and ages in the class. Consequently, the pupils enjoy their work and are keen to meet the challenges set for them. The use of a range of teaching strategies ensures that pupils are interested and motivated. The good relationships in each class encourage learning because the pupils' confidence in the staff enables them to have a go without fear of mistakes. Teachers often use good questioning techniques in lessons to encourage pupils to explain their ideas and thoughts. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to supporting pupils in class, particularly those with learning difficulties.

In two lessons some of the tasks did not present enough challenge. For example, some pupils were asked to simply colour in shapes when they were capable of doing much more. The pace of lessons is sometimes too slow and this causes the attention of some pupils to wane and they do not make as much progress as they could. Occasionally pupils are not given enough independence in their learning. This happens when teachers dominate too much of the discussion and do not give the pupils enough time to solve their own problems and make decisions about their work. In one lesson opportunities were missed to develop the learning at the end of the session because of the way the timetable is arranged.

Training has improved the teachers' understanding of the use of assessment. The school has developed more rigorous systems for assessment and has a bank of useful data. Teachers are beginning to make more use of this information to modify their planning. However, some inconsistencies remain in using the information to ensure all pupils are challenged in all lessons. Extra support groups are in place but these do not always succeed in helping pupils to improve enough. This is because pupils do not attend the groups on a regular daily basis and the school has not monitored the impact of these sessions. Pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets for learning and are not always clear about exactly what they need to do to achieve their targets. The quality of marking continues to be inconsistent.

There is some informative marking but it does not always help the pupils understand how they can improve their work.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning and establish robust assessment procedures—satisfactory progress .

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. In the relatively short time since the last visit there has been steady progress in establishing the systems needed to enable the school to have a clearer picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The way in which the headteacher is checking on the progress of each pupil is improving and she is becoming more aware of where things are going well and where they are not. These systems are beginning to have an impact on the progress the pupils are making. However, this information is not always used effectively by individual staff to ensure the work set for the pupils is stretching them. The school systems to check on the quality of the teaching and learning have also improved. More staff are now involved in this process and teachers are receiving some feedback to help improve performance. This information is often too general in nature and needs to be more specific regarding what needs to happen to improve the quality of teaching and learning in each class.

The way in which the governing body fulfils its responsibilities has improved considerably and is now good. Governors are receiving good information from the headteacher to enable them to have a growing understanding of standards and achievement in the school. They are challenging the school to do better and this is having a positive impact on the progress the school is making. They are also taking the initiative and have undertaken an extensive analysis of a recent parental survey. A group of governors are currently involved with the headteacher in deciding how the school will respond to the ideas and suggestions made by parents and carers.

The role of the senior teacher is being enhanced. She is increasingly involved in the general management of the school with the headteacher. There has been steady progress in the way the subject leaders help to oversee the work of the school. The headteacher has provided them with time to check on the quality of teaching and learning and they are gaining confidence. The impact of their work to date is limited but it has the potential to promote sound improvement if there is greater rigour in the way the quality of teaching and learning are assessed and clear plans to improve achievement are developed.

The school makes good use of the accommodation and further improvements have been made to the playground to add interest for the pupils. The hall

remains inadequate. As yet the school and the LA have been unable to find the resources necessary to improve the situation.

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

- improve leadership and management and develop the roles of the senior teacher and subject leaders—satisfactory progress
- resolve weaknesses in accommodation and resources—satisfactory progress.

External support

The LA continues to provide good support and challenge to the school. The level of support from specialist consultants has decreased, in line with the action plan, to enable the school to develop its own systems to check progress and promote improvement.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures—satisfactory progress.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection—satisfactory progress.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the amount of good teaching by improving the quality of feedback teachers receive. To do this feedback must focus on what it is that needs to happen to improve the quality of teaching in each class.
- Continue to develop the role of subject leaders.
- Improve the way the school measures the impact of the actions it takes to improve achievement of pupils who are making less than satisfactory progress.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Northamptonshire and the Diocese of Peterborough.

Yours sincerely

Andy McDowall
H M Inspector