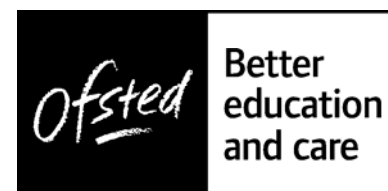


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10th February 2006

Mrs Sandra Bayley
The Headteacher
Berkeley Junior School
Marsden Drive
Scunthorpe
DN15 8AH

Dear Mrs Bayley,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BERKELEY JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Jackie Barnes, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 February, 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 became subject to special measures in July 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, several members of staff, the chair of governors and two representatives of the local authority.

Context

The deputy headteacher was on leave when the school was inspected in July 2005 but she has now returned to work. There have been several permanent and temporary changes to staffing, including additions to the leadership team. At the time of the inspection, some classes were being taught by temporary staff on a day-by-day or longer-term basis. Some Year 4 classes were away on school trips.

Achievement and standards

Pupils who join the school at the start of Year 3 have standards well above national averages. Standards attained in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were broadly average in 2005. The progress that pupils made between the ages of 7 and 11 was much less than it should have been and the school's performance was exceptionally low compared to that generally found nationally. Progress in mathematics and science was in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally; progress in English was slightly above this level but still too weak. Progress made by boys and by some of the pupils on the register of special educational need was exceptionally low.

Observations in lessons confirmed that, overall, the pupils' progress is still much less than it should be. The main reason for this is because teachers' planning does not clearly identify what learning outcomes are expected from different groups of pupils; too often there is a single target for the whole class which, even where pupils are grouped according to their ability, is not appropriate for all learners. In general, the progress of the most able pupils is less than it should be. The school's identification of underachieving pupils is not having any significant impact on daily lesson planning and pupils' consequent progress.

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

- Raise the pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development continues to be satisfactory overall. Most pupils show concern for others, and respect for adults and themselves. They attend regularly, are punctual and are keen to learn. Their good behaviour contributes significantly to the calm atmosphere in most lessons. There remains a tendency for pupils to be inattentive when not fully engaged by the teaching or where classroom routines are not clearly established. On these occasions, pupils talk among themselves, or call out, which slows their progress and that of others in the class. Concerns about behaviour at lunchtime have been reduced through the training of lunchtime supervisors, although there remain unexplored opportunities to make lunchtime play more interesting. The school does not make full use of the pupils' personal skills, especially their independence and the ability of some to sustain their own learning in lessons. A small number of pupils have significant behavioural problems. The school has now identified these pupils, with external support from the local authority, and their progress is checked regularly. Guidance about personal relationships, behaviour and moral choices are an integral part of the school's arrangements for the daily assemblies. However, those seen were not attended by staff other than the individual leading it, which limits the opportunities to develop the themes of assembly within lessons or to use assembly as a corporate celebration.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning remain unsatisfactory overall. However, the teaching in a minority of lessons was good, and in one lesson it was outstanding. In most lessons resources are well prepared and the sequencing of teaching points is given due attention. In the good lessons, pupils are highly motivated because individual teachers have ensured the level of challenge is well matched to pupils' capabilities and previous learning so they make good progress.

In most lessons, the school's approach to planning gives little attention to progress in pupils' learning. Many pupils are either struggling to understand what is being taught or are finding the work too easy. In both cases, this leads to low motivation and concentration. Occasionally it results in low levels of disruptive behaviour. This mismatch is evident in English and mathematics, as well as the non-core subjects. However, the use of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has led to the steps in each subject being taught systematically. The planning of lessons is not sufficiently specific about the learning and achievement expected from pupils with different capabilities.

The school has made significant improvements in procedures for assessment. Data and information are now collected and analysed but strategic evaluation is weak as yet. A tracking system identifies each pupil's present level of attainment and the progress they make. The results of the analysis are used to group pupils into sets for core subjects, and to identify those pupils who are underachieving as targets for an improved pace of learning. However, the impact on pupils' progress of these improvements is reduced considerably because of the limitations in the planning for pupils' learning in lessons. As a result, many pupils receive the same teaching and similar tasks, despite what is now known about their achievement. Although the assessment system is based on the use of stepped levels, these are not used by teachers in their planning to identify appropriate outcomes and progress. There are occasional exceptions to this picture, such as a lower set for mathematics in Year 6, where the good match of both teaching and learning to the pupils' identified needs led to brisk progress and high self-esteem. Pupils also made good progress in a Year 3 upper set in literacy, where the teaching was stimulating and the use of the smart board provided visual support for pupils' understanding. Throughout the school, pupils learned most effectively when they were involved in practical activities for a large part of the lessons.

The curriculum remains unsatisfactory because many subjects are not yet taught effectively enough to ensure pupils' progress overall is consistently good. There is no specific responsibility within the leadership team to ensure the curriculum has the impact on pupils' learning and achievement to which the action plan aspires. The school has all the necessary subjects in place and some extracurricular provision, as well as useful visits and visitors. However, there is no overall plan to guide the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding through these

experiences. Links across subjects, where pupils could apply in different contexts what they learn in English, mathematics and science, are not yet in place.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum – inadequate

Leadership and management

The school has completed a new action plan and a school self-evaluation within the last few months. The former includes some specific targets for standards, but the latter does not. Although the last inspection referred to raising attainment as a key area for improvement, recent data has shown that pupils' progress is the most important issue facing the school; at present its targets all link to standards, although the targets in the local authority's statement of action are based on value added. The action plan is well structured, with a clear range of tasks. There is a need to refocus some of the actions to address strategic weaknesses in the school's work rather than general objectives based on the last report. Many of the details included in the evaluation column are in fact actions to be completed or evidence of progress; there are few references made to the governors or others taking responsibility for evaluating the school's progress.

The plan for improving leadership and management has no actions which are specifically intended to address the role of the headteacher, although a mentor has been included in the local authority's statement of action. There has been some confusion over arrangements for starting this support and the headteacher has not been involved in any other form of personal development plan. There has also been some confusion over whether the local authority's statement of action had been sent to the school. The planned targets for improving the quality of teaching and learning are too modest; the figure of 20% above satisfactory in the core subjects is well below the national standard and, together with merely satisfactory teaching in the foundation subjects, will not improve pupils' progress sufficiently. The equivalent target in the local authority's statement is for 50% good teaching. The timeline provides some guidance on when training will occur, but no clear indication of the strategic spread of initiatives across the next 18 months.

Morale in the school is good. The arrival of several new members of staff has helped generate a sense of optimism and the efforts of the headteacher are widely appreciated. The headteacher has had to manage a period of continuous staff absence. However, she lacks an analytical approach to strategic evaluation and is not well-informed about some of the problems that continue to provide challenge. This has inhibited her ability to form judgements about progress and lead the improvement of the school. The leadership team contains a number of new staff who are developing in their roles, but few of these have any whole-school leadership responsibilities. Issues such as curriculum development and teaching and learning across the school are not well served in the current structure. As a result, much of the hard work of staff is not yet having a significant impact.

The work of the governing body has been improved significantly through the efforts of the school improvement committee and the appointment of additional governors. There is a better understanding of accountability and responsibility but not all governors are equally active. Good links are developing between governors and subject or year co-ordinators. The improvement committee is developing a better level of evaluation and this is starting to have an impact on the work of the full governors. Whereas the headteacher's report was merely noted in October, by January it gave rise to 22 bullet points in the minutes. However, the quality of the headteacher's reports, though improving, remains weak because they are not evaluative enough; they do not reach judgements about progress and there is too little consideration of two of the three areas for improvement. For example, they report the standard of satisfactory teaching but do not comment on the extent of good teaching, which is far more significant in the school's development. Similar weaknesses can be found in the school's self-evaluation, which is too often descriptive. Much work remains to be done in developing the skill of drawing together key points of evidence into a clear and incisive evaluation of where the school is and what it should do next.

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

- Improve the leadership and management including governance – inadequate

External support

The local authority has produced a clear statement of action with appropriate costings; it provides a range of support from key personnel, including extensive help for the headteacher and governors. It provides for a termly evaluation of progress through a committee of senior staff which includes the school's headteacher. General criteria for measuring progress on each area have been included but further detail regarding success criteria would have been helpful, for example in terms of the specific gains to be won through training of the governors, headteacher and subject leaders. Its appointment of five additional governors has been effective. It has provided wide support for the school through its team of specialists and also for the newly qualified teachers. However it has not monitored the implementation of its own statement of action carefully enough, particularly in regard to support for the headteacher over which some confusion has existed.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Quality of the local authority's statement of action – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the school's ability to evaluate its own performance and respond to strategic challenges
- Develop effective practice for using assessment information to improve teachers' planning and thereby accelerate pupils' progress
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of teaching across the school and use this analysis to increase the proportion of good and better teaching

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Gray
H M Inspector