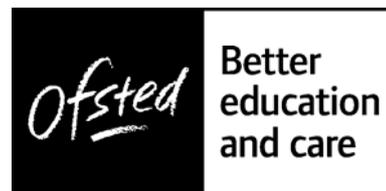


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Mrs J Biddle
The Acting Headteacher
St Dominic C of E VA Primary School
St Dominic
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13 March 2006

Dear Mrs Biddle

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST DOMINIC C OF E VA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 March 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 May 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

I observed several lessons, reviewed pupils' books, scrutinised school documentation and action planning, talked with pupils, and met with the headteacher, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection a new acting headteacher has been appointed by the local authority to cover the spring and summer terms, as originally arranged. Interviews for the permanent headship are scheduled for

later this month. There are sufficient, appropriately qualified applicants for the interviews to take place, which has not previously been the case.

Achievement and standards

There has been a beneficial review of pupil groupings in all age groups to try and ensure a better match between the work which is set and pupils' learning needs. There has also been significant progress in the assessment of pupils' work which is having a positive impact on achievement and standards. Recent developments in setting targets are beginning to engage pupils in understanding their strengths and weaknesses, especially in written work.

In Key Stage 2, a review of completed work shows that more pupils are now making better progress. There are still many gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The standard of attainment in English is improving more quickly than in mathematics. Improvements in other areas of the curriculum are becoming evident with the improvement in literacy skills. Standards in Key Stage 1 are too low. Completed work and discussions with pupils show that progress is slow and basic skills are weak. Writing is well below expectation for the Year 2 pupils and mathematical ability is not being adequately developed in Year 1 or Year 2. Children in the Foundation Stage are making appropriate progress for their age.

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

- raise standards in English in Years 2 to 6, especially in writing—satisfactory progress
- raise standards in science, mathematics, design and technology and geography in Years 4 to 6—satisfactory progress
- raise standards and improve provision in ICT throughout the school—satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Good progress was made on the key issue in relation to this area at the time of the last monitoring inspection and this has been maintained. Pupils of all ages enjoy coming to school and are eager to learn in class. They generally work well and sensibly especially when the work provides sufficient challenge otherwise they become restless. Behaviour is generally good in and around the school. Class rules are clearly displayed and reference is made to them to reinforce good behaviour and consideration for others. Rewards and sanctions are mostly used appropriately, although sometimes house points are given too freely and haphazardly to the upper juniors. This does not help pupils' understanding of how effort and achievement are consistently acknowledged.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- set in place suitable systems for improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour in Years 4 to 6—good progress.

Quality of provision

Teaching is mostly satisfactory. Some good teaching was observed, especially in the lower junior class. There were also examples in other classes of less effectively planned activities which did not enable pupils to make as much progress as they could. Good teaching engages pupils in understanding the well planned learning intentions and reflecting on their own progress within the lesson. Some tasks are not well matched to pupils' needs in the mixed Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 class, leading to inadequate progress and some wasted time. Children in the Foundation Stage have activities which are now more appropriate for their age group and are receiving good support from the teaching assistant.

Particularly good progress has been made with regard to sharing learning targets with pupils. This has been a significant piece of work by the whole staff team and is beginning to show benefits in pupils' progress especially in English work in Key Stage 2. Following a visit to another school, staff discussed many new assessment ideas which they have begun to implement. The use of 'marking ladders', which clearly explain criteria for progress, is significantly helping both teachers and pupils to focus on areas for improvement. Pupils are also becoming more involved in self assessment thereby improving their knowledge of their own learning needs. Pupils are not yet sufficiently encouraged to respond to teachers' comments in their exercise books.

A new policy for marking pupils' work has now been agreed. Marking is generally improving although teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is weaker than in English and comments do not focus enough on the mathematical content of the work in order to help pupils improve. This is more noticeable for the higher attaining pupils.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 4 to 6—satisfactory progress
- further develop systems for pupils' assessment to ensure that the information gathered is used effectively to set targets for improvement and to adjust planning where necessary—satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The new acting headteacher has settled quickly, establishing good relationships with the staff, pupils, governors and parents. Effective day to day leadership and management have been adequately secured and the transition from one acting headteacher to another has not been too disruptive

for the school. The acting headteacher is providing effective leadership and has quickly grasped the issues facing the school. She is making a positive impact through monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, scrutinising pupils' work, and introducing the marking policy. Whilst continuing with planned improvement activities, the headteacher is also reviewing the current demands on staff to ensure a sensible and manageable workload. Future action is being planned jointly with the staff, the chair of governors, and the local authority adviser.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- take immediate steps to improve the leadership and management of the school—satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority inspector continues to give good and appropriate support to the school and to oversee the provision of continuing professional development and other opportunities to address the key issues. The inspector has a good understanding of the needs of the school, its staff and pupils. Good, professional support has been given to the acting headteacher. A productive link with another school has been arranged by the inspector for mentoring the headteacher and other staff members.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures—satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection—satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed until a substantive headteacher is in post.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to develop ability grouping in Key Stage 1 to raise standards of attainment by ensuring work is well matched to pupils' learning needs.
- Develop the effectiveness of new assessment techniques by ensuring marking in Key Stage 2 is relevant to each pupil and by encouraging them to respond to written comments.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Way
H M Inspector