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Mr J Wallis
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Dear Mr Wallis

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MARAZION PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 February 2006, 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 September 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 lessons and other activities, scrutinised documents, met with the acting headteacher, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority, and spoke with staff and pupils.

Context

Since the school was made subject to special measures, the headteacher has been absent through illness and the local authority has temporarily brought in a headteacher from another school. One other teacher is now also on sick leave and this post is being covered by a supply teacher. Another member of staff has just returned to the school part time, after maternity leave.

Achievement and standards

Standards in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are too low. In the end of Year 2 tests taken in the summer term 2005 the pupils' performance was significantly below the national average in writing and mathematics and below in reading. No pupils achieved the higher Level 3. The overall attainment in the tests, although better than in 2004, is still significantly below the national average. At the end of Key Stage 2 the 2005 tests show a continuing downward trend in English and mathematics with the overall attainment significantly below the national average. Pupil numbers are low in each year group and the data must be used with caution. However, the progress made during the junior years remains weak and this is partly due to an earlier lack of achievement in Key Stage 1.

Current progress is inadequate in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 because pupils' knowledge and understanding, especially in the basic skills, are weak. Many pupils do not have good speaking and listening skills. There are signs of better progress being made in Key Stage 2. Much work has been done to introduce a new system for tracking pupils' progress and identifying those who could be doing better. This data is providing better information for teachers about pupils' capabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes are mostly satisfactory and pupils are keen to learn when the work meets their interests. Attendance continues to improve and is now in line with the national figure. Unauthorised absence is higher than it should be but the school is carefully monitoring punctuality. Recent changes in staff, including the employment of temporary staff, have led to inconsistencies in the management of behaviour. Consequently the pupils are not taking enough personal responsibility for their behaviour in and around the school including in the playground. Progress has been made on pupils' enjoyment of their learning because they are more involved in their work but they are still not achieving as well as they could. Spiritual and multicultural opportunities for the pupils have improved. A link has been established with a school in India, religious education lessons now take place regularly, and there are more examples of time for personal reflection in science, art and music.

Quality of provision

Progress is being made on setting work which better meets pupils' needs. Teachers' planning is comprehensive and often includes information on pupils' groupings, lesson objectives and activities. It does not yet identify clearly enough the specific outcomes to enable a better evaluation of pupils' progress and the overall effectiveness of the lesson. Although ineffective lessons were seen in which pupils made insufficient progress the problems mainly arose from the different needs of mixed age pupils and a lack of clarity about short term objectives. The organisation of teaching and learning and the classroom

environment in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 do not provide pupils with an appropriate educational experience nor adequate opportunity for them all to make progress.

Good progress has been made on gathering and analysing performance data. This is now being clearly recorded and is beginning to be used in planning pupils' work. Teachers are reviewing the way in which pupils are involved in understanding their own learning needs and have made good progress in this area. Examples of work drawn from National Curriculum exemplars with clear criteria for National Curriculum levels are being shared with pupils to increase their understanding of individual and group targets. Feedback from teachers has also improved. Many examples of good marking, giving pupils clear guidance on how to improve, were seen in recent work in the junior classes.

A much wider range of activities has been included recently in the school's curriculum, such as involvement from the Eden Project, the use of local history sites and visiting musicians and artists. New curriculum plans are being used for art and religious education. Pupils have been engaged in a community project which has successfully brought together a number of different curriculum areas and has been presented in a variety of interesting ways, giving the pupils much enjoyment. This is a good example of what the pupils and the school are able to achieve. Several aspects of the school's curriculum remain to be planned in more detail offering greater integration of basic skills into all subjects.

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

- match work more closely to the pupils' needs based on rigorous analysis of test results and data about the pupils' progress—good progress
- raise expectations through a more aspirational and stimulating curriculum—satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have been much improved in the short term. The seconded headteacher has had a very positive impact on school improvement and is fully focused on improving the weaknesses identified by the recent inspection. The quality of teaching is now monitored regularly and pupils' work and progress are being more carefully tracked. Progress is being made on more effective leadership in curriculum and other responsibilities which have been redefined and redistributed. The post Ofsted plan is a detailed and considered document which is being systematically implemented, reviewed and monitored by the headteacher and the governing body. The governing body is well led by the chair and works effectively with the headteacher to evaluate the action plan's impact. The capacity to improve is satisfactory because of the clear focus on raising pupils' attainment and providing a more relevant and interesting curriculum.

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

- urgently improve strategic leadership and management—satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority is committed to improving the educational provision at the school and has produced a clear statement of action. It is also providing appropriate support through the attached inspector and other authority services. Staff have benefited from visits and training by local authority consultants. The long term resolution of the leadership is not yet clear.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures—satisfactory, particularly on account of the recent staff changes in such a small school.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the organisation of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, including the arrangement of the learning environment, to improve the pupils' standards and progress.
- Continue the progress on matching work to need by making effective use of the data analyses now available.
- Continue to raise pupils' self-esteem by improving their personal responsibility for behaviour in and around the school.
- Clarify the options to resolve long term leadership of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Way
H M Inspector