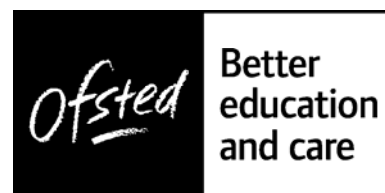


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Mrs A Norcross
The Headteacher
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1 March 2006

Dear Mrs Norcross

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EAST HUNTSPILL SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 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 October 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, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The school organisation remains the same, but there have been changes in lunchtime supervisory staff.

Achievement and standards

The focus of this visit was achievement and standards in English and mathematics. Test results for Year 2 in 2005 were average, but few of the higher attaining pupils reached the levels expected. By the age of eleven, test results in 2005 show that pupils' attainment was exceptionally lower than what is expected nationally. No pupils gained the higher levels in mathematics and science. Throughout Key Stage 2, progress in English was below national expectations and significantly below in mathematics. The findings of the inspector and the school's evidence show that standards remain below national expectations in Key Stages 1 and 2 in English and mathematics. The school's assessments identify inconsistent achievements with most progress being made in Years 3 and 4, particularly in writing. Achievement in mathematics remains the area of slowest improvement. However, satisfactory progress in some year groups is evident in their knowledge of multiplication tables.

Children start in the Foundation Stage with levels which are broadly average and by the end of the year most reach the levels expected of them. Progress made by pupils in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory but the pace of learning in Year 1 is insufficient. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress due to carefully focused additional support. The higher attaining pupils benefit from having more challenging targets to improve their learning. They say that knowing what they are supposed to learn makes them 'work harder'. Additional sessions provided by teachers, learning support assistants (LSAs) and the headteacher have enabled pupils in Years 2 and 6 to participate in specialist programmes to boost their learning. The impact on standards is not known at present but is being monitored carefully to assess its effectiveness.

The school has made good progress in developing effective systems and structures to assess pupils' attainment and to monitor progress in English and mathematics. These systems have not been in place long enough to indicate any significant impact on raising standards. Better use of clear targets in English and mathematics has helped pupils to understand what they need to learn next and pupils state that having targets 'encourages' them to do better. The school has been innovative in devising its own assessments for mathematics which are intended to give a clear measure of the progress made by pupils in each age and ability group. In English the staff regularly check pupils' written work and have agreed challenging targets for improvement.

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

- raise standards of pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics—
inadequate progress.
-

Personal development and well-being

This is not an area for improvement and was not monitored on this visit.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and none was inadequate. In almost half the sessions observed teaching was good including the small group 'booster' sessions. Planning in English and mathematics is thorough with a focus on supporting pupils of differing ages and abilities in each mixed age class. Staff draw effectively on national guidance for teaching English and mathematics. Activities are usually interesting but sometimes offer insufficient challenge for the range of ages and abilities in the class. Whilst teachers annotate their planning to evaluate pupils' learning, inconsistent use is made of opportunities to assess progress within lessons. Some teachers make good use of questioning to assess pupils' learning and to challenge their thinking. They have high expectations that pupils will be able to explain their views articulately.

Teachers know what pupils should be learning but this is not always shared with them effectively. In good lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils' progress and offer a high level of challenge. In these sessions the pace of learning is brisk and pupils are excited learners. They are eager to do their best, know their targets and are highly motivated by the reward systems. They are proud of their achievements. However, pupils are not always reminded of their targets when working in subjects other than English and mathematics. For example, they do not make the link between writing in an English lesson and in another subject. Experienced LSAs are very well deployed to help groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties. Lessons are well organised and suitably resourced. Where interactive whiteboards are used they add to the motivation and interest of the learners. Classrooms are attractive and welcoming places. Displays are used successfully to celebrate pupils' achievements and remind them of their targets in very imaginative ways.

The curriculum is satisfactory and was not a focus of this visit.

Care for pupils is satisfactory and was not a focus of this visit.

In good lessons teachers provide high quality guidance to ensure pupils know what they are doing well and how they can improve. Marking often relates directly to what pupils are expected to learn and how they can make their work even better. This is evident in Key Stage 2 classes where pupils are expected to assess their own work in English and mathematics using a 'traffic light' system. Pupils are also required to give reasons for their judgements.

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

- ensure that teaching meets the needs of all pupils by age and ability—satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have improved considerably. The headteacher knows her school well and has put in place good systems for monitoring teaching and learning with clear measures for identifying improvements. However, these are not yet embedded fully. The school has devised a number of targets for school improvement to demonstrate the effectiveness of the leadership and management in raising standards. These measures of success are in place for most areas for improvement in the school's draft action plan. The headteacher has made good progress in addressing issues related to support from her senior and experienced colleagues. There is now more effective joint working towards school improvement. Support provided by local authority consultants has been valued and has helped subject leaders to plan for improving standards and progress. Input from a local consultant headteacher is providing useful guidance and advice for the leadership and management team. The headteacher is making good use of analysis of test results to monitor pupils' progress and to identify gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The impact of actions taken as a result is not available at this early stage.

There is a strong commitment to school improvement by all staff and governors led by the headteacher's dedication to helping pupils do much better than in the past. The governing body is now complete and working hard to provide good support and challenge to help the school to improve. Governors are attending training to give them a clearer understanding of how they can work more effectively. They are soon to attend a session on monitoring school improvement to support the school's development. The school's financial planning is closely aligned to the plan for improvement.

There are noticeable developments in the pace of improvement and a greater sense of urgency to ensure the school does its best for all pupils. The level of awareness of what needs to be done and the recognition that the momentum has to be maintained indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

- ensure that leadership and management have detailed and measurable targets for school improvement—satisfactory progress.

External support

The local authority has provided satisfactory support for the school through primary strategy consultants and a consultant headteacher. A comprehensive training programme for governors is being developed. The core support group monitors the school's progress effectively. Although the local authority's action plan includes providing the leadership and management with measurable targets for improvement, these are not yet in place. The local authority aims to offer financial assistance to support the school's improvement but this has not yet been discussed fully.

The local authority's statement of action covers effectively the main areas for improvement and has set a challenging target of April 2007 for the school to be removed from the category of special measures.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures—satisfactory.

Quality of local authority's statement of action—satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that staff use every opportunity to assess pupils' progress and to support planning for the next steps in their learning.
- Improve the quality of writing by helping pupils to use their targets to support their written work in other subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Susan Wheeler
H M Inspector