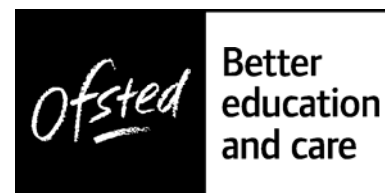


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20 January 2006

Mrs L Gillions
Headteacher
Manston St James CE (VA) Primary School
Sandbed Lane
Cross Gates
Leeds
W Yorkshire
LS15 8JH

Dear Mrs Gillions

SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MANSTON ST JAMES CofE (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Mrs M Crawley and Mr T McDermott, Additional Inspectors, to your school on January 10 and 11 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 was found to have serious weaknesses in May 2005.

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

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior teachers, the chair of governors and representatives from the local authority (LA) and diocese.

Context

The headteacher at the time of the May 2005 inspection retired at the end of the summer term and a new substantive headteacher took up post in September 2005.



Achievement and standards

The results in the 2005 national tests taken by pupils, and standards achieved in lessons, paint a picture of an overall successful school. The majority of children enter the Foundation Stage with levels of attainment which are in line with those nationally and some of them display well-developed communication skills and have a broad general knowledge. They make consistently good progress in their learning throughout Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2 pupils' achievement, reflected in assessments and lessons, is above national levels especially in reading. The good start is built upon throughout Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 6 the results for English, mathematics and science are significantly higher than national levels, especially in English and science.

During this inspection, progress was good in 16 of the 19 lessons observed, satisfactory in two, and inadequate in only one. Progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6, an area for improvement identified in the May 2005 inspection, was good in eight lessons, satisfactory in two and inadequate in one. The 2005 test data shows that, since Year 2, pupils made good progress in science and outstanding progress in English and mathematics. Overall, the school is in the top 7% of schools nationally.

The school is working hard to improve standards and progress in English and science. English has been a major focus for development and detailed schemes of work and lesson plans are used effectively with work suitably matched to pupils' learning needs. Overall, pupils are making good progress and standards continue to improve. Attainment in science is above the national average. There is good use of specialist teaching and the subject co-ordinator plans lessons jointly with class teachers.

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

- Raise standards further, and improve progress in Years 3 to 6, particularly in English and science – good progress



Personal development and well-being

The pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their lessons. They display consistently good attitudes to learning. They settle quickly, have good levels of concentration, learn to be independent from an early age, and take care with the presentation of work. Behaviour both in and out of lessons is of a high quality.

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The caring and spiritual ethos of the school is promoted strongly in class and school assemblies, and in lessons. Pupils have many opportunities to develop compassion and thinking about others through involvement in a wide range of charitable work, including fund-raising for the Adivasi Eye Camp in India, which the school has supported for many years. Pupils are polite and courteous and are very respectful of the views and efforts of others. Relationships at all levels are very good.

Pupils participate in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities and visits, and understand the importance of exercise and a healthy lifestyle.

Attendance is above the national average, but the school lacks rigorous systems for recording and monitoring absence.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was good in 16 lessons, satisfactory in two and inadequate in one. These levels have improved since May 2005. The best teaching is characterised by well-structured tasks, many opportunities to involve the pupils in the lessons, practical tasks which stimulate them, and using probing questions which both challenge the pupils to further effort and enable the teacher to check what the pupils have learned before moving on to the next step. A common feature is the enthusiastic and skilful way teachers present their lessons. They know the pupils well, and there is a real sense of partnership between teacher and learner. The classroom environments are conducive to learning. They are well organised and there are many examples of pupils' work displayed.

Planning is consistent, clear and detailed, especially for the core subject lessons. Teaching assistants provide valuable support to teachers and pupils. They know the children well, and take a full part in lessons.



The school has a clear plan of action to develop further its assessment systems and to establish effective ways of tracking pupils' progress, which are then used to plan the next steps in learning. Although there were systems in place before September 2005, they were not generally available to staff and were used only for statistical purposes. All that has changed; there is now a comprehensive assessment calendar to which the teachers adhere, and monitoring of each child's progress takes place at regular intervals throughout the year. The teachers are beginning to make use of the outcomes, although not all of them are equally confident in the accuracy of their own interpretation of the results of assessment tasks. Nevertheless, the systems are very new and the teachers are eager to make best use of them. The curriculum is broad, balanced, and enriched by a good range of extracurricular activities. The teachers are increasingly identifying how they might use the skills taught in one subject to promote learning in another; for example, basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and English are used well by the pupils to record their findings in other lessons.

Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress. Work is well matched to their needs. Much of the learning takes place in the whole-class lessons, but judicious use is made of opportunities to withdraw pupils for individual or group support.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school were judged to be inadequate at the last inspection. Since September 2005, the new headteacher has made a considerable impact in 'turning round' this crucial aspect of the school's work, rejuvenating and supporting the committed staff team and encouraging it to fulfil its considerable potential. She has made an energetic and determined start in bringing about improvement and has skilfully drawn up an agenda of priorities to tackle the weaknesses identified at the inspection, especially evaluation processes, monitoring, roles of senior staff and assessment issues. The headteacher has gauged correctly the pace of change needed but also the capacity of staff to make changes effectively.

The senior leadership team has been strengthened and is making a positive contribution to the school's regeneration. Each member responds well to the headteacher's firm lead and the responsibilities she gives them. Similarly, subject and aspect co-ordinators are clear about their roles in developing their subjects; for example, each co-ordinator has completed a questionnaire devised by the headteacher, to analyse the strengths and weaknesses in their subject, and use it to write an action plan.

There is an appropriate range of monitoring procedures in place. The headteacher undertakes lesson observations, subject leaders scrutinise workbooks, and lesson plans are checked weekly.

Many of the initiatives introduced since September are still at an early stage of development, but regular monitoring of progress by the headteacher, governors and the LA is effective in keeping developments 'on track'.

The governing body is giving good support to the headteacher and the school under the committed leadership of the chair of governors. He has restructured the committees and enabled governors to take a bigger part in decision-making and broaden their understanding of standards, achievement and how pupils learn. Governors' skills are well used; for example, a finance expert chairs the finance committee, and an ICT consultant links with the ICT co-ordinator.

Throughout this monitoring inspection, there were spontaneous expressions of unqualified support from teachers, governors, and personnel from the LA and diocese for the headteacher's clear vision, willingness to delegate and striving for cohesion and consistency within the whole staff team. The inspection team judges that the headteacher is achieving a high degree of success in all these areas.

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

- Devise and implement rigorous systems to evaluate the effectiveness of its leadership and the quality of its provision, and use the priorities from monitoring and self-review to plan appropriately for improvement with clearly identified areas for action - good progress



- Improve leadership and management by setting up systems for reviewing how well subject and aspect leaders manage and lead their areas of responsibility – good progress

External support

The school has received a high level of effective support from the LA through its inspectors, consultants and other support groups. The diocese has also provided regular and valued advice. The school has been very complimentary about the ease of contact, speed of response, and quality of support received.

Main judgement

There are no major concerns about the school's capacity to improve and it has made good progress on removing the causes of its serious weaknesses.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to establish the assessment systems.
- Establish procedures for recording and monitoring absence.

I am copying this letter to the secretary of state, the chair of governors, the Director of Learning at Education Leeds, and the diocese.

Yours sincerely

Roger Hartley
Her Majesty's Inspector