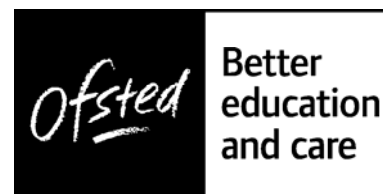


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Mrs A Hill
The Headteacher
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15 March 2006

Dear Mrs Hill,

SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EAST HOATHLY C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Joanna Pike, Additional Inspector, to your school on 28 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 was found to have serious weaknesses in June 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 including five lessons or part lessons. We scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, teaching staff and pupils. Discussions were also held with the chair and vice chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last inspection, the governors have appointed a permanent headteacher who started in January 2006.

Achievement and standards

Results in the 2005 national tests for Year 6 pupils were generally above average. In mathematics pupils' performance improved. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was similar to the national picture in English but better than average in both mathematics and science. The trend in results for the Year 6 pupils is one of improvement, particularly in English and mathematics. In science, improvement has continued from a low point in 2003 to match the national average in 2005. Results in 2005 for Year 2 pupils declined from the previous year in reading and mathematics but improved in writing.

The oldest pupils broadly met or exceeded targets set in 2005 in English, mathematics and science. The school has challenging targets for the 2006 tests, such as every pupil reaching the national average levels in reading and mathematics.

Pupils' achievement in Reception and Years 1 and 2 was a key area of weakness in the last inspection. There are signs of improvement in the mixed Year 1 and 2 class due to better teaching and planning. Standards are closer to those expected and work in both English and mathematics is improving. Pupils are making quicker progress in gaining skills within lessons and their achievement is more marked. In the mixed Reception and Year 1 class, pupils' progress is generally too slow and pupils do not achieve well enough. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement continues to be good. Past work in mathematics indicates that pupils make good progress, particularly in developing their number skills and in applying their knowledge to solve written mathematical problems. In English, written work is imaginative and final copies are well presented.

In the lessons seen, pupils in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class did not make sufficient gains in their understanding of number and they made only limited gains in language based activities such as sounding out letters. Their independent learning skills were not developed or promoted well. In the mixed Year 1 and 2 class, the pupils quickly grasped the purpose and use of adjectives and developed their basic number skills with confidence. In English good progress was seen in activities in Years 3 to 6. In the mixed Year 5 and 6 class, pupils developed their understanding of letter writing effectively when they studied different styles and wrote for different audiences. During discussions they spoke clearly and confidently.

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

- raise pupils' achievement by the end of Year 2, particularly in English and mathematics—satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

The overall good provision for pupils' well-being and personal development continues to be a strength, although weaknesses highlighted for the youngest pupils remain. Pupils willingly comply and are attentive, but their desire to learn is not capitalised upon sufficiently. In the remaining classes, pupils' good attitudes towards school and each other help to promote a working atmosphere where pupils listen,

behave well and enjoy activities. For example, in a Year 4 English lesson, the pupils were very excited when asked to write a fantasy story.

Pupils say they like school and their lessons as well as after school clubs. Their personal development is promoted well in nearly all classes. Activities such as encouraging them to work together in groups, taking on responsibilities in school, and by fostering links with the local community all contribute effectively to their development. The number of visits away from the school is being increased to give the pupils more diverse educational experiences. The pupils value the school council which has influenced changes to the lunchtime eating arrangements. The pupils are developing their awareness of a healthy lifestyle and the range of play equipment at lunchtime actively promotes their physical development. Their awareness of healthy eating is well developed and pupils explain the benefits of eating a balanced diet. Attendance continues to be good. The vast majority of pupils attend regularly and punctually.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching was good in three of the five lessons, or part lessons, seen. In one lesson, teaching was satisfactory. In the remaining lesson, teaching was inadequate. The pace of the activity seen in number work was slow and did not enthuse the pupils. Opportunities for independent learning, while planned for, were not matched well to pupils' abilities or their level of development. Good teaching had common features. Pupils were motivated to listen well as activities were lively and exciting. They were involved actively in their learning and activities were closely matched to their needs. There are good relationships throughout the school but these are more evident in Years 1 to 6. The natural enthusiasm of the youngest pupils is not directed sufficiently, although they do cooperate by sharing their resources willingly. Teachers' planning is clear and makes good provision for pupils of different abilities in most classes, including those with learning difficulties. For the combined Reception and Year 1 class, planning does not ensure this close match. Teaching assistants are well deployed with groups of pupils and individuals where appropriate. Pupils' progress is monitored more effectively as teachers are increasingly being held to account for the progress their pupils make.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and includes sex and drugs education as part of its health education programme. The weaknesses in the way that the curriculum is planned for the Reception year still remain, although some improvements have been made. These include a better variety of activities which generally cover the required areas. However, individual activities are not well matched to the interests or abilities of the children. Good use is made of trips, visits and visitors to enrich pupils' experiences. For example, Year 6 pupils have a residential trip and visits from local police help to promote pupils' awareness of staying safe. A good range of extracurricular activities, such as art, gardening, sports and music tuition, enhance pupils' experiences. Specific targets support pupils with learning difficulties in their individual plans and pupils benefit from a range of activities matched to their needs. The care, guidance and welfare of pupils continue to be good, as was recognised in the last report. Risk assessments and arrangements for child protection are well

organised and effective. There are good levels of guidance for pupils with learning difficulties. Activities are well supported, aided effectively by teaching assistants, and are well matched to the pupils' needs. Vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and supported very well. Both their academic progress and pastoral needs are monitored closely.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning in the Reception Year by ensuring that the required Foundation Stage curriculum is taught in full accordance with the needs of children of this age—inadequate progress.

Leadership and management

The appointment of a permanent headteacher has provided stability. This has gone some way to improving the weaknesses in leadership and management identified in the last inspection. However, the short time that the headteacher has been in post means that not all areas have shown immediate improvement. She has identified those areas which can be addressed quickly and those where further improvement is needed. For example, the links with parents have been improved quickly. Parents appreciate the headteacher's more proactive approach in communicating about issues as well as giving them more visible support for fundraising and social events. Staff now manage their subjects better due to good training and a review of their responsibilities. Regular monitoring of teaching provides the headteacher with an appropriate view as to where strengths and weaknesses lie. This builds upon the good support given by external advisors. However, improvement to the quality of provision for the Reception and some Year 1 pupils has been inadequate despite good levels of support.

The governors' action plan covers the key issues from the last inspection effectively. They have monitored progress closely, whilst being aware of addressing other longer term priorities. Open and frank information from the LA advisor and headteacher, about where improvement is evident or not, is giving governors a clearer picture about progress. The focus on improving the stability of management, raising achievement in Years 1 and 2, and developing relationships with parents has been effective. It is now moving to those areas that have shown less progress. The governors continue to provide good support which is helping to increase the school's capacity for improvement. The headteacher and governors are also usefully gathering more views from pupils and parents to aid the school's self-evaluation process.

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

- strengthen leadership and management by securing the stability of the position of the permanent headteacher, continuing the development of subject coordination and ensuring that that planned actions achieve improvement in pupils' learning.—satisfactory progress
- rebuild a more effective working partnership between the school and parents—good progress.

External support

The LA's statement of action and commentary on the school's action plan are good. The LA has effectively helped the school to develop a clear and succinct action plan and was mindful of the need to include the views of the new headteacher. The programme of support has been extensive and has successfully involved a range of activities and long term advice from a consultant headteacher. This has been most effective in the issues related to improving links with parents, strengthening subject coordination, and raising achievement by the end of Year 2. The support given in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class, although extensive, has not resulted in significant improvement in the quality of provision. The LA has been realistic and open about the progress made by the school. The governors and the headteacher value the full and frank account of where weaknesses remain. The level of support given to the school will continue with a mix of advisory support, training and continued help from the consultant headteacher.

Main Judgements

The school has made satisfactory progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses. This visit has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the school's performance will be monitored.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the pace of change to improve the quality of provision for the Reception children so that they make better progress in acquiring skills in all areas of learning.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for East Sussex Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Hodge
Additional Inspector