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Mr R Anderson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Anderson

## **SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BRUCHE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Judith Clarke and Anna Dawson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 6 and 7 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, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and senior staff, groups of pupils and representatives from the governing body and local authority (LA).

### **Context**

Since the inspection in which the school was found to have serious weaknesses, the national test results for 2005 confirmed inspectors' findings that the standards and progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 were not high

enough. Staffing has remained generally stable; the school has appointed two newly qualified teachers in the last year.

### **Achievement and standards**

The school's assessments of Year 2 pupils in summer 2005 showed that overall standards in reading, writing and mathematics were just above average.

This represented particular improvement in reading following a dip in 2004 results, especially in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level. The number of pupils achieving the higher level in mathematics was just above the national average, whilst in writing it was well below.

The attainment of Year 6 pupils in all three core subjects in the 2005 national tests was broadly in line with the national average. These results fell well short of the school's targets for those pupils and represented inadequate progress based on their prior achievements at the end of Key Stage 1. In addition, a below average number of pupils attained the higher level in the same tests.

In lessons pupils' achievement is now satisfactory overall. This represents an improvement since the last inspection because in almost half of lessons pupils' progress is good, particularly in Key Stage 1 and Years 5 and 6. The school has set challenging but realistic targets for Year 6 pupils in 2006; these reflect the improvements being made whilst acknowledging that the proportion of pupils on target to reach the higher level is not yet as high as it should be. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. There is some catching up to do before all the higher attaining pupils reach their full potential.

### **Personal development and well-being**

The pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school, as reflected in their above average attendance. However, punctuality during this inspection was inadequate. Many pupils take too long to settle down, losing valuable learning time. This does not promote a good working ethos or provide a calm and brisk start to learning. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes during lessons are generally good in the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Year 6, whilst elsewhere these are more variable. Most pupils concentrate well during lessons and try hard to complete work. This is particularly the case when work is set to challenge the pupils and teachers hold high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are well

behaved at break times. The school council increasingly helps pupils to take social responsibility by, for instance, making decisions about acceptable codes for behaviour and in helping to promote a healthy lifestyle. Pupils eat fruit and healthy snacks and declare that drinking water is 'cool'.

An increased emphasis on involving pupils in reviewing their learning and sharing targets for improvement has strengthened their personal development. For example, pupils in Years 6 know precisely what they have to do to improve their writing. Participation in after-school activities and residential trips contributes well to pupils' enjoyment.

Spiritual, moral social and cultural development is satisfactory. Social and moral development is promoted well during class discussions in 'morning meetings' and assemblies. For example, pupils reflect on world events and are sensitive to the needs of others. They make donations to some charities and world disaster appeals. Most are developing a satisfactory awareness of good citizenship by, for example, collecting materials for recycling and making contributions to community events such as participating in the church annual fete. Although pupils have a good understanding of their own culture, they learn too little about the diverse nature of society. This was also the case when the school was inspected in 2005.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and Learning**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Although some inconsistencies still remain, a better proportion of teaching is now good and this is improving pupils' achievement. Particular strengths in teaching at the end of Key Stage 1 and in upper Key Stage 2 are having a positive impact upon the learning for these groups of pupils. The older pupils in Year 6 report that they work hard in lessons and find their tasks demanding. They feel the pace of their learning is challenging them.

There remain inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school and a small proportion of teaching was inadequate. In the Foundation Stage the teaching is satisfactory overall, although opportunities are missed to develop the children's thinking and language skills. In Key Stage 1 teaching is strong whilst in Key Stage 2 it is more variable. Where teaching is strong, this is because it is confident, well-informed and brisk, learning is focused and clear and consequently the pupils make good progress. A key factor contributing to the slower progress in a minority of lessons is the unsettled behaviour of some of the pupils. In these lessons the teachers have to spend too long encouraging good behaviour and sorting out low-level disruption. This

slowing of progress occurs in lessons that do not motivate pupils sufficiently, resulting in restlessness and a loss of interest.

In the most effective lessons, pupils are engrossed in their learning, work hard and achieve good results. Teachers question pupils skilfully and information and communication technology is often used well, which pupils particularly enjoy. In these lessons the teachers challenge the pupils' thinking and place the correct level of demand upon them. The pupils respond positively; for example, in a Year 1 science lesson the pupils listened carefully to the teacher, thought about making their test fair and came up with the correct conclusion at the end of their testing. They enjoyed their lesson and learning was secured because of the active involvement of the pupils. Similarly, in a Year 6 literacy session the teacher insisted that the pupils not only said whether they liked a particular clip of film or not but also gave reasons for their opinion. In this way the pupils were required to justify and articulate their ideas.

The school has recently become part of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP); this is leading to a clearer whole-school approach to setting targets and understanding where the pupils are up to in their learning. Consequently the teachers are better aware of what the pupils' next steps of learning should be, which groups need focused support and what strategies to use. As a result tasks in lessons are now better matched to the pupils' needs and the teachers' questioning is more specific. Pupils are also increasingly aware of what they are learning. All teachers describe the learning objectives at the start of lessons so that the pupils see how their work develops from previous lessons. In Year 6 the pupils have group targets for improvement but they know where their own weaknesses lie and what they need to do to improve. They find this helpful. This rigorous use of targets is developing throughout the school. Marking of pupils' work is supportive, giving praise and encouragement, and is beginning to complement the clear targets set for their improvement.

## **Curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. The school has a draft curriculum map, which is almost ready to be put into place. This should provide a systematic approach to the teaching of all the subjects in the National Curriculum. The school recognises that the next step is to ensure a steady progression in the teaching of basic skills. At present the improvement of the curriculum is hampered because some subjects lack a leader and there is the need to ensure that subjects link together in a cohesive way so that the pupils see their relevance.

Planning in each year group is more consistent with similar-aged classes covering comparable work. In some cases interestingly different aspects are taught; for example in Year 6 one class studies Spanish as a modern foreign language whilst the other class studies French. Here the expertise of the staff is appropriately recognised. Setting and grouping of the pupils for key areas of their work are improving the pupils' progress. The older pupils recognise that this helps them as they can push on without having to wait for those who find their learning hard, whilst acknowledging that some pupils who need extra time and help receive it. This is addressing the needs of the higher attaining pupils.

The pupils speak with great enthusiasm about their residential visits, looking forward to the next such opportunity. The school's provision in this respect is good. Extracurricular activities available appeal to a wide range of interests. Visits to places of interest support the pupils' learning, but insufficiently in promoting an awareness of living in a multicultural society.

### **Care guidance and support**

Academic support and guidance for pupils have recently improved, with the setting of targets in literacy and numeracy across the school. Pupils know the level they are working at and what they have to do to improve. However, the full impact of this work is not yet evident in sufficiently improved standards and achievement.

Recently reviewed strategies to combat bullying and promote good behaviour have been agreed with pupils, parents and teachers and are having a positive impact. For instance, there have been no exclusions this school year. Pupils know that behaviour and anti-bullying procedures are better than they were, saying that 'most of us get on well together'. However, the procedures to promote good behaviour are not consistently applied across Key Stage 2 and some pockets of unacceptable behaviour remain.

Procedures for attendance are appropriate and pupils are rewarded for good attendance. Punctuality procedures are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure a prompt start to learning.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is barely adequate. Pupils' needs are identified early and some strategies are put in place to meet them. For example, some pupils with behavioural, social or emotional difficulties work towards their targets in the 'den' with good support and successfully build their social skills and self-esteem. However, there is little additional support for those who find learning difficult in literacy

and numeracy. Procedures to ensure child protection and pupils' safety are secure. Pupils say that they 'feel happy because they feel safe'.

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

- Iron out inconsistencies in teaching and curriculum organisation – satisfactory

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and leadership team correctly identified the underachievement of a significant proportion of pupils at the time of the last inspection, and recognise that this has not yet been eradicated. However, pupils' progress is now being rigorously tracked across the school, with teachers taking a shared responsibility for setting targets and ensuring the progress of each individual in their class.

Lesson observations by senior staff, the school's adviser and LA's consultants have led to a more focused view of professional development needs. As a result, improvements are being made to the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is satisfactory or good, although inconsistencies still exist. The pace of leadership and change required to eradicate serious weaknesses has been slow initially, but is now beginning to quicken. There are still important issues to consider in the near future regarding classroom organisation linked to financial constraints, and subject leadership following staffing reorganisation. Establishing effective teamwork in the amalgamated school has been particularly slow, and some strategies have not been sufficiently thought through. The headteacher is aware of the need to pay careful attention to the staffing team structure, for example in sharing whole-school leadership responsibilities with the deputy headteacher. The strong leadership in literacy and assessment makes a good contribution to the improvements being made in monitoring provision and acting upon findings. The leadership's checking and evaluation of the impact of changes is developing following a slow start. Senior leaders are now producing progress reports as a result of monitoring activities, although not all of these make direct reference to the impact of actions on the outcomes for pupils.

The school has had to deal with a number of different action plans resulting from inspection, school improvement targets and ISP targets. These are now being blended together in a more manageable format; this is appropriate. Attention should now be paid to ensuring that these plans are rigorous

enough to explain how the results of monitoring activities are to be used to bring about further improvement.

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

- Ensure the leadership monitors more rigorously than checks on the impact of any changes made – satisfactory

### **External support**

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory. The school has received support and guidance since 2004 when concerns were raised about the overall quality of education. Due to delays in the publication of the previous inspection report, the school's action plans and the LA's statement of action and commentary were completed relatively recently. This meant that, whilst the LA had correctly identified weaknesses in the governors' action plan, it had not yet worked with the school to improve this. The LA considers that the school has the capacity to make the necessary improvements whilst recognising the need to continue closely supporting the leadership team in its monitoring and evaluation of actions taken.

The LA has facilitated the support of a consultant headteacher and additional input from the school's link adviser and primary strategy consultants to work with the leadership team and all teaching staff. The school's involvement in ISP is helping to ensure whole-staff responsibility for raising standards, monitoring progress and setting targets. The LA's plans are appropriate and focus well on the areas for improvement. They identify measurable outcomes by which the completion of planned actions can be checked, although the success criteria are not so strong in relation to raising standards.

### **Main Judgements**

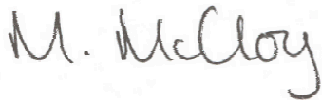
The school has made satisfactory progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses. This visit has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the school's performance will be monitored.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is good or better, and there is a more consistent picture across the school
- Implement the planned review of the curriculum as soon as possible
- Improve the strength and quality of whole-school leadership and management
- Ensure that the school's behaviour policy is consistently applied in order to further promote enjoyment and pace in learning

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

Yours sincerely



**Mrs Marguerite McCloy**  
**H M Inspector**