

Tribal Education  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline  
08456 404045  
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Mrs Deborah Wilson  
Yorkswood Primary School  
Kingshurst Way  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B37 6DF  
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Dear Mrs Wilson

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF YORKSWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Andrew Watters HMI and Ian Knight, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 January 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 June 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, deputy headteacher, the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science, a learning mentor, the chair of governors, the governor responsible for health and safety, a representative from the local authority and the associate headteacher.

### Context

Since the school was placed in special measures in June 2005 there have been a number of staff changes. Three teachers have left the school and another is on long term sick leave. Two new teachers have been appointed. The school is led by a senior leadership team consisting of the headteacher, deputy headteacher, Key Stage 2 coordinator and special educational needs

coordinator. Phase leaders for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 join this team to form the senior management team. The headteacher is being supported by an associate headteacher.

### Achievement and standards

Standards in the 2005 National Curriculum tests fell for pupils in Year 2 and were too low. For pupils in Year 6 standards were about average. However, the school's own data indicates that the overall progress pupils make by the time they reach Year 6 is not good enough. The school's analysis of performance for pupils in Years 2 to 5 shows that at least a fifth of children do not make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. In two year groups over 50% of pupils failed to make the expected progress in reading and writing. This was reflected in a significant proportion of lessons where the pupils' progress was limited. The gap between what the children are currently attaining and what they are capable of is not closing quickly enough. However, a minority of pupils are making better than average progress.

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

- raise standards of literacy—inadequate progress.

### Personal development and well-being

Children throughout the school are pleasant and well mannered. They remain positive about learning even though in too many lessons they are not challenged enough. The restlessness that results is not adequately dealt with by some teachers and learning slows. Children are rarely excited and motivated in lessons because teaching lacks drive and pace. However, they take part enthusiastically, work hard, and make good progress on the few occasions when teachers really engage them. Overall, too many children are passive learners and depend on the teacher too much. They have little opportunity to work independently and lack the confidence to do so.

At the time of the last inspection attendance was well below average although new strategies were in place to make improvements. These have been implemented consistently and attendance, whilst still below the national average, has improved. Children with poor attendance are monitored continuously and action is taken with their families to reduce absence. Only a very small number of families have not responded.

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

- raise the level of attendance by involving parents more constructively—satisfactory progress.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning remains unsatisfactory. There is very little teaching of consistently good quality and too much that is mediocre. Daily planning is generally weak and assessment is not used well enough to match the pupils' work to their different starting points and capabilities. The quality of teachers' marking is unsatisfactory overall because the pupils are not given enough written guidance about how to improve their work. Similarly many children are unaware of their curriculum targets. Overall, expectations are too low and consequently far too many pupils underachieve. Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection persist. In English lessons there was an over reliance on poor quality worksheets which were either too easy, caused confusion, or contained words that were too difficult for some children to read. In too many lessons learning objectives were confused with the pupils' activities and plenary sessions were not used well enough to check the children's progress. In the few good lessons the pupils' work was challenging and stimulating and presented in lively and imaginative contexts. Questions were used effectively to probe the children's understanding and challenge their thinking. In nearly all lessons the quality of relationships was good.

In guided reading sessions the pupils who worked with the class teacher or a teaching assistant made reasonable progress but the pupils who worked in small groups without adult intervention achieved little and made unsatisfactory progress. There are too few opportunities for the pupils to work in pairs and small groups in order to gain confidence in speaking.

Religious education is taught in all year groups and follows the local agreed syllabus.

Reasonable progress has been made to ensure that health and safety procedures are audited and that risk assessments are attended to. The governing body intends to consider the revised health and safety policy at its next meeting in March. One of the governors has taken responsibility for this area of the school's work and is carrying out his duties diligently. The local authority has produced a helpful audit of health and safety issues and risk assessments which identifies what further action is required. The action plan stated that all risk assessments would be completed by November 2005 but this target date has not been met.

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

- raise the standard of teaching and learning all round—inadequate progress
- make sure religious education is taught in all years, according to the locally agreed syllabus—this area for improvement has been met in full
- ensure that auditing of health and safety procedures is systematic and that all risks are assessed—satisfactory progress.

## Leadership and management

Although the headteacher is very positive and is determined to bring about the necessary improvements, leadership and management have not improved sufficiently since the inspection in June 2005. A senior leadership team has been established and the headteacher has good working relationships with the deputy headteacher and the chair of governors. However, the school has not yet established a culture of rigorous self-evaluation to enable it to improve quickly enough.

The school's action plan addresses all the key issues from the inspection report as well as how it intends to improve leadership and management. The proposed actions are clear and specific with appropriate links made between the areas for improvement. For example, improvements in the quality of marking have been planned alongside work to increase the level of challenge for all pupils. However, monitoring activities are limited and do not provide enough detail about how children's learning should improve. Timescales are not sufficiently precise. As a result the school is not in a position to evaluate its work effectively.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher observed teaching throughout the school in the autumn term and prepared brief notes about what they saw. Individual teachers received verbal feedback but they were not given clear targets for improvement. Areas for development have not yet been followed up. The summary of judgements from these observations is over generous and the headteacher's view of the quality of teaching is far more positive than that seen during the inspection.

The subject leaders for English, mathematics and science have a reasonable understanding of their responsibilities. However, they have not been enabled to carry out their roles fully. For example, initiatives have not been followed up through a clear strategy for implementation, monitoring and review. As a result, children's learning has not improved.

The governing body's scrutiny committee is developing an understanding of its role in holding the school to account. However, the governors are not receiving sufficient information about the school's performance and the pupils' progress. As a result, the governing body does not have a sufficiently clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It is, therefore, not in a good position to make informed decisions affecting the school and meet its statutory requirements.

The school's prospectus has been amended to include national comparative assessment data for seven and eleven year olds. Although the school has now fulfilled its statutory requirements, the information provided for parents does not enable them to compare their own children's performance with national expectations.

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

- make sure the prospectus contains national comparative data for 7 and 11 year olds–this area has been met in full.

#### External support

The local authority's (LA) statement of action is generally satisfactory. It identifies resources and includes an outline timescale as well as specifying monitoring and evaluation activities. However, as with the school's action plan, the lack of a detailed timescale is likely to make it difficult to monitor the planned outcomes with sufficient rigour.

The LA carried out a review visit in November but this paid insufficient attention to the school's progress since the previous inspection. The LA's notes of the visit state that there is an intensive programme of lesson observations but inspectors found little evidence of this in school.

The headteacher is receiving mentoring support from an experienced associate headteacher.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures–inadequate.

Quality of LA's statement of action–satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school by providing challenge for all pupils in every lesson.
- Establish and implement a rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in order to raise standards and eliminate underachievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby  
Her Majesty's Inspector