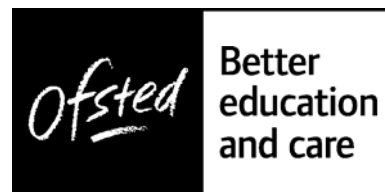


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Mrs Christine Stain
Chilvers Coton Community Infant School
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CV11 5RB

8 March 2006

Dear Mrs Stain

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CHILVERS COTON COMMUNITY INFANT SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Jane Melbourne HMI and Rodney Braithwaite, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 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 September 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 pupils' books. They observed 17 lessons and two assemblies, and met with the headteacher, key members of staff, groups of pupils, parents, non teaching staff, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Following the Section 5 inspection in September 2005, the headteacher resigned and the local authority has seconded an experienced headteacher in a temporary capacity. The authority has also seconded an experienced teacher to the Nursery and another to the Foundation Stage for two terms.

Two of the governing body, including the chair of governors, also resigned and a new chair of governors has been in place since January 2006.

Achievement and standards

Standards overall remain inadequate. They are below average in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2, and well below average in science. The school now fulfils its statutory obligations to provide a full curriculum following its introduction of the agreed Warwickshire scheme for religious education (RE). It is at present too early to judge standards of attainment in RE. Standards in nearly all subjects are below average because there is insufficient depth to most of the curriculum. The use of numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) to benefit learning in other subjects is inadequate. Little improvement has been made in ICT where some teachers still have inadequate subject knowledge. The ICT suite is not used often enough in order to help pupils develop their skills and interest.

Pupils throughout the school show great enthusiasm for learning but are not yet reaching their full potential. Most are underachieving and capable of reaching higher standards in many areas. A number of initiatives are now being introduced by the acting headteacher, with the support of the local authority, in efforts to improve standards after a long period of little progress.

Standards remain below average throughout the school.

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

- raise standards in English, mathematics, science, ICT and RE—inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes are satisfactory and sometimes good. Most pupils are eager to learn. Their behaviour is good where it is well managed by the class teacher.

The school is acting to improve poor attendance and the efforts made so far have begun to make a difference in reducing absenteeism this term. It has successfully introduced new incentives and an attendance reward system. A new system of monitoring enables the school to identify pupils and the reasons for non attendance, which are almost always for valid family reasons or the observance of religious festivals. The school is now emphasising the importance of regular attendance on pupils' progress. It realises its ongoing responsibility to drive forward initiatives and improve communication with parents about attendance.

Pupils do not always enjoy their education. Some still find the work lacking in challenge and unstimulating. Children in the Nursery and Reception years have good levels of independent learning and opportunities to use their imagination. However, in Years 1 and 2, pupils are insufficiently engaged and frequently spend long periods of time listening to teachers. They have yet to make decisions that affect their learning and do not have many opportunities to express their opinions. They are not developing skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Care for pupils is satisfactory and the new head has been proactive in making the school a safer place to be in. However, some health and safety issues remain. Uneven surfaces in the playground present a potential hazard to pupils' safety. Staff are insufficiently aware of recent child protection procedures and guidelines and some are not aware of signs to look for. The needs of some pupils with difficulties and disabilities are not sufficiently addressed through planning and teaching. In Year 1 particularly, these pupils may be occupied and expected to work independently of the other groups, rather than experiencing good quality teaching and learning.

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

- improve attendance—satisfactory progress.

Quality of provision

During the visit 17 lessons or parts of lessons and two assemblies were inspected. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory or better in 10 of the lessons seen including two good lessons, one in the Nursery and one in Year 2. Teaching was inadequate in 7 lessons all in Year 1 and in the Year 2 class with a large number of boys. These findings are similar to those found in the inspection in 2005 and in the very recent local authority review. Weaknesses in teaching remain and there has been very little improvement in the last six months.

In the two good lessons teachers had realistic expectations of the pupils. All pupils were learning from the start because the work was stimulating and enjoyable. There are good relationships in these classrooms and teachers and teaching assistants work closely together as a team. Work is well suited to the needs of all and planning takes account of previous work.

Inadequate teaching and learning are due to a number of factors. In some subjects, for example ICT, teachers show a lack of confidence in their subject knowledge, this is reflected in the slow progress of their pupils. Teachers are not always clear on the learning objectives for their pupils and sometimes do not share them, so pupils do not know what they are going to learn. In some lessons observed, for example, science in Year 1, higher attaining pupils received little or no support from adults, and they made inconsistent progress. Middle and lower attaining pupils receive far more attention from

teachers and teaching assistants but some of them make insufficient progress because the pace of teaching is slow and undemanding. This results in a significant number of pupils who, while keen to learn, are not appropriately challenged. The lack of suitable stimulation and challenge can lead to boredom, lack of focus, and occasionally inappropriate behaviour.

Assessment procedures are satisfactory in English and mathematics but are used very inconsistently in Years 1 and 2. In all other subjects assessment is inadequate and not used by most teachers, especially in their planning. There is now some short and medium term planning which is an improvement but daily planning has insufficient focus on individual needs. Consequently many pupils do not work on tasks planned for their abilities. Personal targets for pupils are often very broad and aimed at large groups or the whole class. Few pupils can recall their targets, or have any knowledge as to how they can improve.

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

- ensure that teaching and the learning activities meet the needs of all learners in Years 1 and 2 so that they do as well as they should— inadequate progress.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher, seconded only four weeks before this first monitoring visit, has already made a positive impact in the school. She has established a strong direction for the school and has high expectations of staff and their performance. She has reorganised pupils into single age classes and reduced class sizes. Some teachers have been moved and the delivery of the Foundation Stage has been improved. As a result staff morale is improving and there are increased opportunities to share and celebrate children's work in assemblies. Parental newsletters have been re-established and parents appreciate the new contact they have with the school and opportunities to share their children's achievements. Parents are now more aware of the topics their children are studying. A change from previously repeated annual topics to new ones, such as The Iron Man and Dinosaurs, has stimulated family discussion. As a result, one parent described their child's enthusiastic follow up of model making at home. As yet there has been no formal canvassing of the views of parents or their involvement in the further development of the school.

There has been a major focus by the headteacher on modelling and monitoring teachers' planning. Teachers' plans are now monitored every week and feedback provided for individual staff. The headteacher is aware that, whilst strides have been made in establishing the significance of planning and statutory curricular coverage, there is still much work to do in improving its quality and ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met. Whilst there is

currently no self evaluation form (SEF) completed by the school, the headteacher has made an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and immediate areas for development. There is still much work to do in developing pupils' independence and initiative in most lessons, although there is good practice to disseminate in the Foundation Stage. School development planning is built into the LA support plan although the headteacher has not yet had the opportunity to make a significant formal impact to development planning. However, she knows that it requires revision to have a stronger focus on the immediate small steps that will reward success and raise standards.

Other senior and middle managers do not yet realise the significance of their role in raising standards and modelling by example. Monitoring of standards by subject leaders and action planning, for example, is underdeveloped. Whilst the headteacher has demonstrated that she has the capacity to make improvements, other staff with management responsibilities have still to establish their capacity to manage effectively.

The new chair of governors is taking her role seriously and is aware of the need to hold the school to account for its progress. It is too early to gauge the impact of the new governing body on this first visit.

The school lacks sufficient resources for learning, for example computers, books, and science equipment. Non teaching staff are not effectively deployed in Year 1 and Year 2 to meet the needs of all pupils including those with particular difficulties and disabilities.

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

- ensure that the agreed developments are implemented and monitored effectively and that the curriculum meets statutory requirements—satisfactory progress
- improve pupils' independence and initiative and involve them and their parents in helping to make decisions about how the school can improve—inadequate progress.

External support

The LA identified the school for additional support in September 2004 which, although extensive, did not have full impact until the headteacher and two of the governing body, including the chair of governors, resigned following the September 2005 inspection. The secondment by the LA of a headteacher from a successful infant school, at the start of the spring term 2006, has raised staff morale and identified the particular issues that need to be addressed. The school received a two day monitoring visit by LA inspectors in January 2006, two weeks before the HMI monitoring visit. This visit reported inadequate progress on all identified issues since the September report. It is too early to judge the impact of other strategic support provided by the LA.

The LA statement of action is extensive and detailed on how it will support each of the identified areas requiring improvement. However, it is insufficiently focused on the immediate issues to be tackled and how small steps in improvement will be prioritised and measured over time. As such it is inadequate and requires a sharper focus. The LA should address these weaknesses and prepare amendments by the second monitoring visit.

Main Judgements

The progress since being subject to special measures is inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the inadequate teaching throughout Year 1 and in one Year 2 class.
- Clearly define the roles, responsibilities and accountability of all subject leaders and those with posts of responsibility.
- Expand the learning resources and ensure that current resources, including the use of non teaching staff, are used more effectively to enrich the curriculum and ensure that pupils achieve their potential.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Chief Education Officer for Warwickshire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clive Kempton". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Clive Kempton HMI
H M Inspector