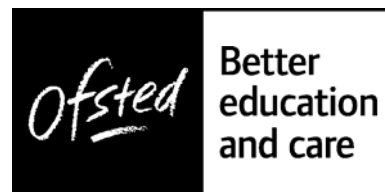


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Mr D Walsh
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23 March 2006

Dear Mr Walsh

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EASTLING PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 March 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in April 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

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents including pupils' work, and met with the headteacher, the chair of governors, members of the school council, the school improvement partner and the coordinators for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. Four lessons were observed, one from each class.

Context

Staffing has remained stable since the last monitoring inspection. The school has been successful in recruiting staff to manage the after school provision which will start in the summer term. Pupil numbers have continued to rise

since the last visit and now stand at 102, with a projected roll of 106 for the start of the summer term. This is almost 15 per cent higher than at the April 2005 inspection.

Achievement and standards

By Year 6, pupils are attaining standards that are at expected levels and some pupils are reaching higher standards. They are on course to meet the challenging targets set for them by the end of the year. Attainment across English, mathematics and science is consistent. Standards in writing have been an area of relative weakness across the school, noted in the last monitoring inspection. Since then there has been improvement and writing skills are better. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their growing skills in writing at length. The recently introduced 'Big Write' day is intended to address this issue and to give pupils more experience in extended writing tasks.

In Year 2, standards are at expected levels but with few examples of pupils attaining higher standards. Accordingly, the targets set for these pupils look very challenging indeed and are unlikely to be met. This is because the school has overestimated the progress that might be made over time. It is not due to any weaknesses in teaching or in curriculum content. Pupils in this year group are able to write correctly demarcated sentences and some are beginning to write at some length, although writing is not yet showing a joined up script.

In lessons pupils are making good progress and achieving standards that are good in relation to their ages, abilities and prior achievements. This means that they are making up lost ground well. This is due in the main to teaching that is more effective, demonstrating much higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Better assessment procedures are being used effectively to identify pupils whose progress is not as expected and to provide appropriate support. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress because their needs are clearly identified and they receive well targeted support.

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

- improve achievement for all pupils—good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are being very well promoted. Pupils behave very well in both lessons and around the school. They are polite, helpful and confident. They enjoy their learning because lessons are interesting and interactive. One pupil commented, "Everyone is involved in lessons and gets asked questions." Relationships between pupils and adults are of a high order. This is because pupils know that they are listened to and

their views are valued. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and they do this well. The school council, playground buddies, and various monitors are among the ways in which pupils play an important part in helping the school to be a real community where each child matters.

In lessons, pupils work well together and are able to share ideas and make suggestions that help them to learn. A good example of this was seen in the Reception class where children worked in pairs to establish patterns using a variety of equipment. They were confident in explaining the criteria they had chosen, for example, the size of different shapes. Pupils of all ages are keen to contribute in lessons, offering confident responses to teachers' questions.

There is good awareness of how to live a healthy life and pupils know, for instance, the value of well chosen foodstuffs in their packed lunch boxes. They understand the potential hazards in a busy playground and know the value of safe play equipment and how it should be used. Indeed, the school council, representing their peers, is active in working with the staff to make the playground safer still with ideas about games and equipment.

Quality of provision

Teaching continues to improve. Records of the systematic checking of the quality of teaching demonstrate that the school is on track to meet its end of term target of all teaching being of at least satisfactory quality with a majority that is good. This inspection visit confirms the school's view of teaching quality. Each class was observed and the quality of teaching was never less than good and, in one lesson, was excellent. This represents significant improvement from the last visit.

Teachers' planning is of consistently good quality. It makes very clear exactly what pupils are to learn and this is shared with pupils at the start of lessons. It also identifies how pupils' progress will be assessed and teachers check this effectively during lessons. Good attention is given to ensuring that pupils' learning tasks are well matched to their needs and that tasks are varied in style. This results in lessons that are interesting and provide pupils with different ways of learning. Pupils respond well to this provision and recognise the high expectations that their teachers have of them. The challenge for the more able pupils has been increased but there are still missed opportunities in some lessons for their learning to be promoted even more effectively.

Teaching assistants play an important part in helping pupils to learn. Their work with small groups is successful because they use good quality questions with pupils that extend their thinking rather than just helping them to complete tasks. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good gains in their learning.

Staff make links between subjects so that pupils can see how their learning fits together. In a Key Stage 1 literacy lesson relating to the comparison of

story settings, one of which involved a polar bear, the teacher included elements of science in looking at how ice melted. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in lessons to stimulate pupils' thinking and to present information in an interesting and clear way.

The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of after school activities which are attended by nearly all pupils. The board game club, for instance, is a very good opportunity for pupils to interact with each other and with adults in an informal way, promoting their social skills well. Reports for parents on progress are clear and helpful, demonstrating what pupils have covered and the learning that has taken place. .

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

- improve the quality of teaching—good progress.

Leadership and management

The post inspection action plan is being followed well and the school is meeting its targets for improvement. Governors are very well briefed on the progress of the plan and they have a good understanding of what the school is doing well and where further improvement is needed. They monitor the work of the school systematically and provide valuable challenge to the school's management in holding it to account for progress.

The headteacher continues to monitor the work of the school well and is suitably focused on checking the impact of improvements on pupils' learning and achievement. Since the last inspection visit the role of subject leaders has developed significantly. Individual teachers are now taking on more responsibility for identifying strengths and weaknesses in subject provision and are discharging this role well. Regular lesson observations, analyses of pupils' work, and scrutiny of teachers' planning all contribute to an accurate picture of provision and a clear agenda for improvement. Lesson observations are very helpful in identifying where practice is strong and where it could be better. The emphasis has been, quite rightly, on what teachers are doing in the classroom to promote learning. Now that teaching quality is much more consistent not enough emphasis is given to evaluating the appropriateness of pupils' learning.

Management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is developing well. The coordinator has a good understanding of the day to day progress of these pupils through regular discussions and written feedback from teaching assistants and teachers. Individual education plans have been modified well to take better account of the needs of parents and carers in reviewing progress. Not enough use is yet made of opportunities to monitor the effectiveness of support through direct observation.

The whole school commitment to improvement is a key feature of the effective leadership that is evident. There is no element of complacency about the success that the school is achieving. For example, a recent parents' questionnaire return showed that parents' views about the school were much more positive than at the April 2005 inspection. The school has responded quickly to the one area that was not so strong which is that relating to information about how children are progressing, identifying how it could provide better information to parents.

School leaders have successfully built a staff team that is united in its efforts to provide a high quality education for pupils. The capacity of this team to improve the school's work still further is good.

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

- improve the quality and impact of leadership—good progress.

External support

The school continues to make effective use of the varied support made available by the local authority. The advice and guidance it receives is welcomed and acted upon. As a result, the rate of improvement has been sustained from the last inspection visit.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures—good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection—good.

Newly qualified teachers may not yet be appointed. This judgement will be reviewed at subsequent visits.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the level of challenge for the higher attaining pupils is consistently good across the school.
- Give a greater focus to pupils' learning and achievement when evaluating the quality of lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael Chisnall
H M Inspector