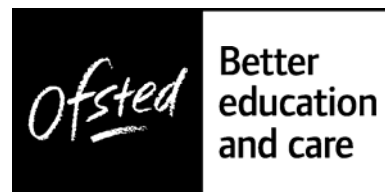


CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Direct Tel: 01695 566930
Direct Fax: 01695 729320
Email – inspectionsservices@cfbt.com
www.ofsted.gov.uk



3 July 2006

Mrs M Downey
Seconded Headteacher
The Oaks Community Primary School
Rochester Drive
Ellesmere Port
Merseyside
CH65 9EX

Dear Mrs Downey

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE OAKS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Adrian Simm, Additional Inspector, to your school on 27 and 28 June 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 February 2006.

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.

Focus of the visit and evidence gathered

For this inspection visit the inspectors focused on the progress within three of the four areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006. Progress on raising standards and achievement will be evaluated at the second monitoring inspection when the results of the end-of-key stage assessments and tests will be available.

Inspectors observed 12 part lessons and one assembly. Each class was visited at least once. Discussions were held with the seconded headteacher, the deputy headteacher and several key staff. Discussions also took place with several governors, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA). A range of documents was examined. Pupils' conduct was observed around the school and at break and lunch times, when inspectors had informal conversations with them.

Context

Since the school became subject to special measures in February 2006 there has only been one significant change to the teaching staff. The Year 1/2 class teacher left her post at the end of May. Since then a temporary, but experienced teacher, has taught this class. At the end of this term the two newly qualified teachers, appointed in January 2006 will leave the school as they come to the end of their contracts. Two new appointments have been made for September 2006; a permanent headteacher and a very experienced class teacher.

Achievement and standards

The February 2006 inspection found that over the previous two years, standards in national tests were exceptionally low. The achievements of children in Year 6 ranked in the lowest five per cent in the country. There were serious shortcomings in the children's grasp of basic skills in reading, writing and number.

Since then the school has improved its systems for monitoring pupils' progress and identifying underachievement. More information on pupils' progress has been gathered and analysed. Most pupils now make satisfactory progress in lessons. However, this satisfactory progress is not yet sufficient to enable pupils to regain the ground they lost due to inadequate learning in the past. As a result underachievement persists for pupils of all abilities.

The results of the 2006 national tests for Year 6 pupils in English were available for this visit. They show that standards remain very low. However, early indicators show that pupils exceeded the school's own expectations and are likely to have improved significantly on the English results of 2005. This reflects the greater care and attention given to the preparation of pupils, as well as signs that many pupils are eager to do well.

Because standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science were not a focus for the visit there is no evaluation on progress on this area for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- The school needs to raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school – **not evaluated**

Personal development and well-being

The school is now a much calmer place than described in the previous inspection report. Pupils' behaviour is improving in class and around the school. There are

fewer incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are more responsive to teachers' clearer expectations, to the code of conduct and reward system, and to the improved support structures. There are still weaknesses in some pupils' attitudes to learning. Their concentration and listening skills sometimes waiver and some of the boys especially have a tendency to chat and fidget in lessons. However, because of the more effective use of teaching assistants, who now work alongside pupils in lessons, there are far fewer disruptions to learning.

Links with parents are not sufficiently strong to convince them of the importance of pupils attending regularly, and on time. Systems to record attendance are far from robust. These include some statutory requirements, reflecting the governors' uncertainties about their duties and responsibilities. The breakfast club is popular and many pupils now enjoy a healthy meal at lunchtime.

Quality of provision

The school has introduced a range of strategies to raise the quality of teaching and learning. There is better guidance about the curriculum and assessment, including new arrangements for lesson planning. The teaching of mathematics has benefited from the advice provided by the LA's consultant.

As a result the quality of teaching has improved. It was good in four lessons and satisfactory in eight. Crucially, no inadequate teaching was seen. Pupils' behaviour is managed consistently, including in the emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) unit. Teachers are clearer about what they want pupils to learn. Lesson planning has improved and the marking of pupils' work is more consistent and effective. Practical lessons are making learning more meaningful. Pupils' work is valued and displayed to good effect. However, opportunities for pupils to work in pairs, small groups or in independent research are limited because some pupils still fail to manage their own behaviour successfully. Many rush their work and do not check it thoroughly. As a result they often make mistakes. Resources for reading and research, including computers, are being improved.

Before the February 2006 inspection the school had recognised that its curriculum was in need of radical overhaul. It introduced a new format in late autumn 2005 and teachers are now more confident in their planning. As a result the pupils' work is matched to their needs. At the same time the school has prioritised improving literacy and numeracy. Outcomes remain below expectations, as does the pupils' use of information and communication technology and their understanding of cultural diversity and enterprise skills. Older pupils now benefit from regular opportunities to develop their 'thinking skills' during morning registration sessions.

Opportunities for enrichment are gradually being extended as staff become more confident but have yet to have full effect. Assessment arrangements are improved

with teachers demonstrating a much clearer view of pupils' past performance. They are now beginning systematically to measure and record pupils' progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- The quality of teaching needs to be consistently good enough to enable the children in Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach much higher standards and to achieve as well as they should - **satisfactory**
- Improvements to the curriculum are required so that it provides children with more enrichment and meets their needs more specifically - **inadequate**

Leadership and management

The seconded headteacher has proven to be a pivotal appointment. She has been very well supported by her deputy, who only joined the school herself last September, and by the chair of governors. The seconded headteacher has been tenacious in addressing obstacles, supported by the LA. As a result the morale of staff is high. There are several improved management systems, including those for tracking pupils' progress. Teachers have a clearer understanding of what makes a good lesson, especially in English and mathematics. Monitoring has improved and teachers are now held to account. The detailed and extensive plans cover all the areas requiring improvement but at this early stage they do not clearly and succinctly evaluate the impact of changes on the performance of pupils.

Too few of the governors are taking an active involvement in the work of the school, especially in the monitoring of its performance. As a result managers are still not getting all the support they need.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- The school needs to continue to improve and implement the management systems that have recently been introduced, so that performance is better monitored and evaluated in order that many areas of provision are improved. The appointment of a permanent headteacher is key to this improvement - **satisfactory**

External support

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory, as is the quality and impact of the external support provided for the school. The school's adviser has coordinated this process and his support is valued. The LA had identified serious concerns even

before the February inspection. There has been support to the school from specialist officers, some of which has been of good quality. Some has not been prompt enough. This support should be intensified as the school moves into the new term, under new leadership. For example, in keeping with its action plan for the school, the LA should ensure that the effectiveness of the governing body is enhanced through new appointees and training. Relationships with parents and the local community should be strengthened.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**

Quality of LA's statement of action – **satisfactory**

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

Priorities for further improvement

- Involve the community more in school improvement strategies in order to give parents and others a sense of 'ownership' of the school.
- Establish a strong and well informed governing body so that improvements made are secure, and the school can build on them.
- Systematically and critically evaluate improvements in order to provide clear evidence of their impact on the performance of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

Henry Moreton
Additional Inspector