

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 J Biddle
The Headteacher
St Dominic CE VA Primary School
St Dominic
Saltash
Cornwall
PL12 6SU

14 July 2006

Dear Mrs Biddle

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST DOMINIC CE VA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 5 and 6 July 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 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

Several lessons were observed, pupils' books were reviewed, school documentation and action planning was scrutinised, and recent, provisional test data were analysed. I talked to many pupils during lessons and at playtimes, and had discussions with the headteacher, the chair of governors and the local authority inspector.

Context

The most significant change in the school's context is the welcome appointment of a permanent headteacher. This follows a relatively lengthy period of inability to make a suitable appointment. Considerable impact has already been noticed with regard to improvements in the quality of teaching

and learning, the organisation of pupil groupings and the development work for the curriculum and learning resources.

Achievement and standards

During the lessons observed, pupils made at least satisfactory progress and sometimes good progress. However, the standards which pupils attain throughout the school are not yet as good as they could be, but more pupils are now reaching standards which are expected for their age, and a greater proportion of pupils are making adequate progress.

Children in the Foundation Stage continue to make appropriate progress and reach the standards which are expected. Foundation Stage profile moderation for 2006 indicates that children's attainment by the end of Reception is at least similar to the local authority average and, in some cases, above.

The number of pupils in each year group is very small and data needs to be viewed with caution. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils who have just taken the tests and tasks have achieved overall levels which are much closer to previous national averages, showing good improvement on 2005 results. The improvement in mathematics is particularly noteworthy but there are still weaknesses in writing. At the end of Key Stage 2, provisional results indicate that the school's prediction for these pupils was accurate and that reasonable progress has been made in most areas. With only four pupils in the cohort comparative data has no statistical significance.

Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards in science have risen and attainment in aspects of geography and design and technology is now satisfactory. There are ongoing issues with regard to information and communication technology (ICT) because of technical difficulties with some of the hardware. Pupils have an adequate knowledge of basic ICT but more work needs to be done to ensure good use of ICT across the curriculum. Teachers are modelling ICT skills well with increasing confidence in the effective use of interactive whiteboards.

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

- raise standards in English in Years 2 to 6, especially in writing – satisfactory
- raise standards in science, mathematics, design and technology and geography in Years 4 to 6 – satisfactory
- raise standards and improve provision in ICT throughout the school – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Progress on this issue continues to be good. Behaviour and attitudes observed during the inspection were consistently good. Pupils spoke well of

behaviour in general and all those spoken to commented very favourably on their enjoyment of schooling at St Dominic's. Aspects of inconsistency noted in the previous letter have been much improved. This key issue has now been concluded.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- set in place suitable systems for improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour in Years 4 to 6 – good progress. Key issue now completed.

Quality of provision

Staff have worked particularly hard on meeting the needs of individual pupils. The standard of teaching is never less than satisfactory and lessons are now more effective with more pupils making satisfactory progress and wasting less time.

Particularly good teaching was observed in the lower junior class in the morning and for the whole of Key Stage 2 in the afternoon, when pupils all join together. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Key Stage 2 has improved overall. In both the lower and upper junior classes good work was seen, especially where pupils have become involved in cross-curricular projects which have caught their imagination. Lessons are clearly planned with an appropriate focus on the learning intentions. Plans are more frequently being modified on the basis of assessment information – this is a good improvement.

The last monitoring letter noted weaknesses in Key Stage 1 which are now clearly being resolved. This is evident in the attitudes which pupils display and the way in which they mostly settle much more quickly to work and have better responsibility for their own learning. The better outcomes in the tests for Year 2 pupils in 2006 are partly due to the recent focus on individual learning needs. Pupils are improving their listening skills and being given more creative activities which encourage them to respond imaginatively. The level of challenge in their work must be maintained to continue raising standards.

A significant amount of progress has been made by the school on the effectiveness of assessment and the feedback given to pupils. In the last letter it was noted that the staff were beginning to implement better systems for monitoring pupils' progress. These are becoming more firmly embedded and, although not yet fully effective across the whole school, pupils are much more involved in understanding how to improve their work. Good examples were seen of pupils responding to comments in their work books and acting upon the advice given to them.

Good progress has been achieved with improving the curriculum, especially in geography and design and technology. The work done on the geography curriculum provides sound evidence for the school's capacity to continue improving. Through a well balanced and cross-curricular approach incorporating opportunities for English, mathematics and science, the development of geography shows how the staff are looking at more imaginative ways of improving pupils' basic skills.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 4 to 6 – satisfactory
- further develop systems for pupils' assessment to ensure that the information gathered is used effectively to set targets for improvement and to adjust planning where necessary – good.

Leadership and management

The area for improvement identified in the May 2005 inspection has now been resolved. Leadership and management are securely in the hands of a permanent headteacher who has, over the last two terms, demonstrated the necessary vision and skills to initiate effective school improvement. Teaching and learning are being properly and regularly monitored, pupil data is being gathered and analysed, and there is a detailed plan for the review and replacement of basic resources. The pace of change is being well managed and appropriate advice and support are being sought from colleagues and the local authority.

The governing body is well informed, effective and providing firm support for the school through regular visits and reviews of progress. It takes an active interest in monitoring the action plan and in school self-evaluation.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- take immediate steps to improve the leadership and management of the school – good progress. Key issue now completed.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide good support and advice for the school. The county inspector has given significant support to the new headteacher to ensure that innovation and improvement are resulting in positive benefit for the pupils. Through a well planned strategy using local authority consultants and local partner schools, the county inspector has been instrumental in securing school improvement. Funding has been provided for the headteacher to monitor and improve the quality of educational provision and to begin resourcing the areas of greatest need. Links with other schools have been productive in enabling the school to widen its understanding of comparative standards in pupil performance.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed because of the support available in the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Consolidate the good progress made in improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Way
H M Inspector