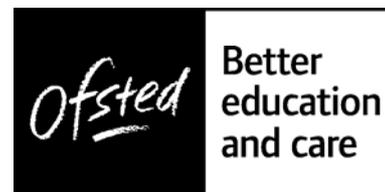


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Miss V Palmer
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Dear Miss Palmer

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE PINCHBECK EAST CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 April 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings. The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 2004.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

During the visit discussions were held with the headteacher, representatives from the local authority, the chair of governors, a parent governor and with members of the leadership team. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils. School and local authority data on standards were analysed and samples of children's work were examined in the classrooms. A range of other school documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and two representatives from the LEA.

Context

The number on roll has fallen to 274. Further decreases are expected as a particularly large cohort leaves the school in Year 6. Numbers are then expected to stabilise. Several of the staffing issues identified at the previous

visit have been resolved, but long and short term illnesses continue to cause discontinuity for a small number of classes. In anticipation of lower number on roll, the school has been through a process to adjust the numbers of teaching staff.

The school is seeking to appoint a permanent deputy headteacher for the new school year to replace the acting deputy headteacher upon her retirement from the current post. Other resignations and promotions have required a redistribution of several curricular responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

The improvement in standards reported at the last visit has been maintained, but the progress which most children make is still not as good as it should be. The data on progress which the school now has collated shows this quite clearly. From their starting positions at the end of Year 2, children in Year 6 have made about one term's less progress overall than the average expected nationally. In other year groups progress is similar. There is still not enough consistently good quality teaching in all year groups and classes.

In discussion with individual children and from their written work it is evident that in the older age classes there are significant gaps in the children's mathematical knowledge and understanding. Number facts are insecure and they have weak strategies for tackling problems mentally. In a few classes much of the children's work in mathematics still relies too heavily on worksheets.

Writing has improved, but a significant proportion of children could write more if they had better opportunities and more was expected of them. The overuse of worksheets continues to hinder improvements in the quality of writing, handwriting and presentation. Handwriting too has improved, but the presentation of work particularly by the oldest children often lacks sufficient care.

Reading continues to be of a good standard and children have an affinity with books. There are few barriers to learning for the great majority of children in this respect and children have little problem in accessing work in the classroom. The re-furnished library is now being used with increasing regularity.

From work seen in children's books, standards in science are similar to that reported at the previous visit and are broadly in line with the standards expected for their ages. But there is little evidence of a high quality, regular and consistent practical approach to science.

There have been significant improvements in the assessing of children's attainment and progress. There is more rigour to the gathering and analysis of information to identify the weaknesses in children's learning. As a result the school is addressing some of the gaps through more precisely targeted help for individuals and groups. These children are now much better placed to achieve what they are capable of in end of year national assessments.

- Raise standards in writing across the school, particularly those of boys, and standards in science across the school: **progress has been satisfactory.**

Personal development and well-being

Personal development and well-being continue to be of a high standard. The children enjoy school, have positive attitudes to learning and try hard. They say that they feel they are improving and the work is more demanding, but a minority of those spoken with feel they could do more.

Behaviour is very good in lessons and around school. Children are helpful polite and friendly. They work well together. They understand too their roles and responsibilities in the wider community and have fund-raised for purposes beyond their own school's needs. They contribute well to the local community through involvement in local cultural and sporting events.

The recently formed school council has given an important new dimension to the school as a community. Through this forum children are helping to make a difference to their school.

Relationships at all levels continue to be very good. Children are very well cared for and say they feel safe and secure.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning have improved and are broadly satisfactory overall. But too little teaching reaches the highest standards or sets children's imagination and enthusiasm alight.

The over-use of worksheets in a significant number of classes lends a routine and mundane conformity to work and places too few demands on children. Much better teaching is seen in the oral discourse between teachers and children. In this there is a sense of pace and purpose. Questions require children to think in giving answers or explanations. The quality of tasks particularly in writing, that follow these parts of the lesson are often disappointing.

Teachers are starting to use the targets for improvement identified for individuals. But this is inconsistent and reflects the variability in marking. In some classes and subjects marking is regular, detailed and helpful. In others it is superficial and does little to take children forward. Older children do however have a good understanding of the level at which they are working and how to improve to the next stage.

Teaching assistants provide valuable support and input for individuals and groups. Classrooms are bright and welcoming and the overall climate for learning is enhanced by many of the displays.

The school covers all the subjects required and adjustments to some aspects of the school day means that the time available is used satisfactorily. The improvements in developing children's knowledge of other cultures and beliefs which were stalled at the last visit have been given a new impetus. There is a greater emphasis on including particular visits and experiences within the curriculum and after school. The planned cultural week will afford good opportunities for children to learn about other religious beliefs and customs.

- Improve pupils' cultural development: **progress has been good**

Leadership and management

The headteacher has continued to build a very clear and accurate view of the school. Her evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses has sharply identified the shortcomings and what needs to be done. There is a strong determination shared by the senior staff and governors to make the necessary improvements.

A significant achievement has been the regaining of investors in people status at a time of uncertainty over staffing. The key necessities of rationalisation have been handled well and a difficult period for the school has been carefully negotiated. As a result, the school now has a staffing structure for the future that is much more appropriate to its size and needs. The budget deficit has been restored to one of financial balance and at the same time modest, but much needed improvements in resources have been achieved.

There have been regular formal checks on teaching and the main weaknesses identified and addressed through individual training and whole school briefings and workshops. Much has been done to improve the learning environment and significant further improvements are in hand.

The main success has been in establishing an accurate record of children's progress. This now provides staff at all levels with the information they need to address the current underachievement. It is clear that many children are not doing as well as they should, but the school now knows who they are and

in what areas they are underachieving. This has enabled more precise targeting of additional support. At the same time this better use of data has shown that the identification of children with learning difficulties is not as precise as it needs to be.

The school now has the management tools to provide teachers and subject leaders with the information and the challenge needed to ensure better progress in the future.

Another significant success has been in the improvement of communications and relationships. Parents now have more opportunities to be involved in their children's work through meetings and workshops. There are regular newsletters which keep parents abreast of developments and initiatives.

The governors continue to provide good support to the senior staff. They have endorsed the strong approach to reining in spending and finances are now much more secure. Their monitoring of the work of the school is good. They have improved their knowledge of the issues facing the school and are active partners in improvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- Improve the leadership and management of the school and the work of the governing body: **progress has been good.**
- Establish whole school record keeping systems: **progress has been good.**

The school has a better capacity to improve. But it still faces some difficult times particularly as staffing structures are re-aligned. The rate of progress on improving teaching and learning still needs to accelerate. Many of the recent improvements such as better use of assessment need to be fully embedded in teachers' planning and evaluation of children's work.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide good support for the school through training and regular checks on progress. This has been a key factor in the confidence with which senior management have addressed the problems facing the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures is satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection is satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the following qualifications:

- all requirements for the appointment of newly qualified teachers are met;
- careful consideration in allocating a mentor is given to the qualities necessary to promote good professional development of a newcomer to teaching.

Priorities for further improvement

- continue to develop the use of assessment information to identify specific weaknesses and quantify progress for individual children and year groups.
- continue to develop the leadership and management of the school
- continue a programme of monitoring of teaching and learning to focus on reducing teachers' over-reliance on worksheets and to raise their expectations of what children should achieve in writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Sutton
H M Inspector