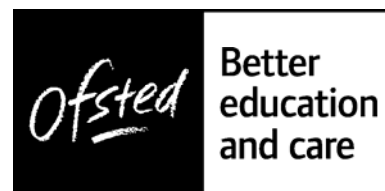


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7 June 2006

Dear Mr Booth

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF RIDDINGS JUNIOR SCHOOL.

Introduction

Following my visit with Alan Lemon Additional Inspector to your school on 17 - 18 May 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 November 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, chair and vice-chair of governors and a representative from the Local Authority (LA).

Context

Since the last inspection one teacher has been appointed to cover maternity leave of the Assistant Headteacher and two teachers have been appointed to full time teaching posts. The deputy headteacher has increased her hours on a temporary basis to 0.9 fte.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards remain inadequate. Teaching is having limited impact on the progress children make. Overall the progress children make in mathematics and writing is inadequate and many children are working at standards below what would be expected. This picture is confirmed by the work in children's books and the progress they make in lessons.

Although the school's assessment data shows that there are small pockets of improvement in children's progress, this is not consistent across the school. For example, in Years 5 and 6 there is some evidence of progress, especially with higher attaining children, but elsewhere achievement is limited and in some cases children appear to have made no progress.

The standard of presentation in children's work varies considerably and is sometimes poor, reflecting low teacher expectations and a lack of pace and rigour in learning.

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

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics and writing – inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Children's personal development remains satisfactory. Children enjoy school and they behave well. However, they are still too passive in lessons and this continues to hold back achievement. Despite the contribution from the LA's support for teaching, opportunities for children to be actively engaged as independent learners have not developed sufficiently. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Where they have opportunities to take an active part in school life they are enthusiastic. Members of the school council take their duties seriously and contribute well to improving the school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching varies. During the monitoring inspection visit some inadequate teaching was seen. Although more satisfactory and good teaching takes place overall, teaching still fails to accelerate the progress children make.

There have been many new teaching strategies introduced since the last inspection to improve teaching, including sharing with children what they will learn in a lesson and what work they are expected to complete. Although these strategies have the potential to improve standards, they are not always used effectively. For example, in some lessons teachers spend too long teaching the whole class; they go through the motions of using different strategies but fail to realise the lack of impact they are having on children's learning. This ineffective use of strategies results in lessons losing pace and children's progress slowing. In good lessons, however, teachers

carefully manage the tasks they give children so that they have appropriate challenge and time to complete their work. Teacher assistants are generally used effectively. They support children with learning difficulties and disabilities well.

Teachers' planning has recently improved and is now detailed and focused on targets. This reflects a considerable amount of work on the part of teachers. However, there are at times too many similar or unnecessary activities planned, which are often teacher led and fail to ensure that children learn fast enough.

Procedures to assess and track children's progress in English, mathematics and science are in place. This provides a consistent process of measuring children's attainment with tests at regular intervals, the results of which are carefully recorded and shared with teachers.

With the data so far collected the school has established a reasonably good basis for analysing children's progress which is helpful in highlighting within each subject the progress children are making. However, the depth of analysis for identifying the causes of any lack of progress children make has not led to a concerted examination of how teaching has contributed to this nor has effective action been taken to improve the situation.

In the classroom, assessment information has been used to group children in English and mathematics by ability with the aim of planning teaching more precisely. This grouping requires children to move to different classrooms. This process is not always managed effectively and some lessons do not start on time. Assessment information is used to set targets in the core subjects and these are clearly displayed in all classrooms. Inconsistencies in the effectiveness of these targets arise because of the variation in how well assessment information is understood. Some targets fail to provide appropriate challenge. Children are often aware of their targets although are less aware of how to achieve them. The language used in writing targets is often too complex for children to understand.

Teacher's marking in some year groups is sporadic and is not adding to the assessment of children's work. Little is done to help the child know what they have achieved or what they need to do next. This picture is not the case in other year groups where marking is more diagnostic, based on what the children should have learnt and helpful in giving children guidance for future learning.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring lessons are well planned and have good pace and challenge for all –inadequate.
- Develop a rigorous target setting, assessment and tracking procedure to inform planning and regularly monitor pupils' progress through school – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate because the quality of teaching is inconsistent and the progress children make is still not good enough. Extensive support from the LA has introduced a number of initiatives into the school. This support has been the driving force for change and the senior management team have not yet managed these initiatives so that they bring about sufficient improvements in teaching and learning.

With LA support monitoring of lessons has taken place and there has been some useful advice given to teachers. There has been little work on the scrutiny of children's work and the quality of teachers' marking. Although the headteacher and deputy headteacher share leadership and management responsibilities they have yet to develop their partnership so they can determine clarity of direction for the school's next stage of development.

The Literacy and Numeracy Co-ordinators are keen to improve the areas for which they are responsible. With the support of LA consultants they are beginning to take on more responsibility including monitoring teachers' planning and children's work in English. However, they have not yet monitored teaching and the impact of their work is limited.

The Governors are aware of the issues that the school still needs to resolve. They have become much more active in providing appropriate challenge to the leadership of the school based on a developing knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels so there is a clear direction – inadequate progress.
- Use rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures to identify areas where improvement is needed and take effective action to remedy the shortcomings – inadequate progress.

External support

The LA's Statement is good and clearly focused plans detail appropriate action. The LA has provided extensive support and challenge and this has given the school the impetus for change and improvement. There has been appropriate challenge for the senior management team to have a shared vision and determination to work together for improvement.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Quality of LA's statement of action – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- To use more effectively the recently introduced teaching strategies so that the progress children make is accelerated.
- To develop further the use of assessment data to identify barriers to children making progress so that effective action can be taken.
- To improve the consistency of marking so that it helps children understand what they have to do next to make better progress.
- To improve the presentation of children's work.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of Governors and the Chief Education Officer for Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook
H M Inspector

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