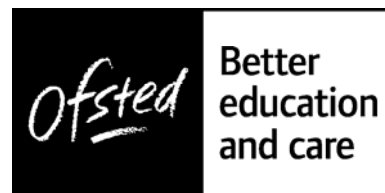


Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Mrs S Harries
The Acting Headteacher
Nonsuch Primary School
Wood Leasow
Woodgate Valley
Birmingham
B32 3SE

18 May 2006

Dear Mrs Harries

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NONSUCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Peter Callow, Additional Inspector, to Nonsuch Primary School on 10 and 11 May 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 July 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

Inspectors observed nine lessons, attended a 'Gold Card' assembly, scrutinised a range of documents and met with the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, and the senior leadership team, the chair of governors, the special educational needs (SEN) consultant, the learning mentor and the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) consultant. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and pupils. Using this evidence, Her Majesty's Inspector made the following observations to the acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the vice chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The acting headteacher, seconded from a local primary school, had agreed to stay until the end of the spring term 2006. This has been extended, on a part-time basis, until the end of the summer term 2006. To develop her leadership and management skills, the deputy headteacher was released from her class commitment in September to work alongside the acting headteacher. Since April 2006, she has been the acting headteacher for three days a week supported by an SEN consultant funded by the LA. The SEN consultant was employed to help the deputy headteacher develop a robust system for meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). She and the deputy headteacher jointly share the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCO).

There have been several staff changes since the last monitoring visit. A supply teacher was appointed at the beginning of the spring term to work alongside the Year 3/4 teacher who started her maternity leave during January. The Foundation Stage teacher returned from sickness absence in February. The newly qualified teacher (NQT) left at the end of the spring term having completed his extended post NQT training period. A new assistant headteacher has been recruited and took up her post in April. Unfortunately, because of a sudden bereavement, she was not in school at the time of the inspection. The teacher who has been absent due to a long-term sickness absence has resigned.

A new headteacher has been appointed for September 2006.

Achievement and standards

Standards of attainment are inadequate overall and significant numbers of pupils are underachieving in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. However, there are signs of some improvement. The school's own assessment data indicates that pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 are on track to reach the revised end-of-year targets in English and mathematics. These targets are not the ones predicted last summer. As a result of assessments in the autumn term, pupils' targets were reviewed and new lower, more realistic targets were set.

Tracking data is providing useful information about pupils' progress. It is used to inform teachers' planning and has the potential to drive up standards. Some progress has been made in setting longer term targets for pupils based on their prior attainment. Targets for the end of each year are now in place, although the expectations of where pupils should be by the end of Key Stage 2 are not firmly embedded in this process. There is still work to be done to establish target-setting and assessment structures which will bring about the

necessary improvement required in pupils' progress and the raising of standards.

Personal development and well-being

Overall, pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Pupils say they are much happier to come to school now. In particular, they are enjoying the new equipment at playtimes, the completed information and communication technology (ICT) suite and the increasing range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Younger pupils look forward to Golden Time which they have as a reward for working hard and good behaviour and attitudes. Pupils' achievements are celebrated in special assemblies which parents also attend. These Gold Card assemblies contribute to the pupils' sense that the school is improving. There was no evidence of the negative attitudes expressed on the last visit.

Behaviour has improved. In supervised situations such as in classrooms, in assembly or outside in the playground, pupils' behaviour is good. However, there are a few occasions such as in corridors, lining up, and in the dining hall when some pupils show that they have not yet acquired the self discipline to behave well when not being watched by an adult.

The school has a clear focus on the Every Child Matters agenda. Pupils are more confident to talk about issues that concern them such as bullying. This is a result of the work on the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) project and the opportunity to discuss issues in circle time. An older pupil, who has been in the school for only a year said, 'I'm much happier here than in my previous school because I haven't been bullied'. During the inspection, children in the Foundation Stage met with a local lollipop lady. They asked her their prepared questions about her job and learned about out how to cross the road safely. Pupils in Year 6 were encouraged to come to school early to enjoy a healthy breakfast of bananas and toast before sitting their end of year statutory assessments.

The school has worked hard, with both pupils and their parents, to improve attendance. After a dip last term, because of illness, it has started to improve again. Attendance has risen from 92.9% in July 2005 to 93.2% this term. There is a growing awareness of the importance of regular and punctual attendance for pupils to make good progress. Pupils are responding well to individual and class rewards for good attendance and only a very small number are a few minutes late. Parents are much better at letting the school know if their child is going to be absent and the school has effective procedures in place for following up those pupils who are absent without explanation. The number of requests by parents for holidays in term time has fallen. The school has introduced a much stricter policy on this in line with the LA's guidance.

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

- raise standards and improve behaviour by seeking ways to combat unsatisfactory punctuality and increase pupils' attendance rate – good progress.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Just over half the lessons seen were good and there was one outstanding lesson. However, there are still too many satisfactory lessons and one lesson was judged to be inadequate. In the good or better lessons, the purpose is made clear at the start and is referred to throughout the session so that pupils have a good understanding about what they are learning. Practical work and discussion are also good features, as these help to engage the pupils and ensure that the lesson moves along at a brisk pace. Well-presented pupils' work is celebrated in displays around the school but the general level of presentation in books is not good enough. There are inconsistencies in the setting out of work and in the standard of handwriting expected.

Whilst planning indicates a range of differentiated tasks, these tasks do not always build on pupils' current knowledge, skills and understanding. Where there is an inappropriate match of work to pupils' abilities progress is hindered. In some satisfactory lessons, pupils sit for too long on the carpet and have insufficient opportunities to be actively involved in their learning. On occasions, this leads to a small number of pupils becoming restless. Teachers and teaching assistants have good relationships with pupils. Teaching assistants support pupils with learning difficulties well so that they make satisfactory progress. The use of adults in lessons is generally effective, but in a few, teaching assistants are underused.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. The increasing use of visits and visitors is making learning much more relevant for pupils. A recent visit to Selly Manor, for example, clearly inspired a number of pupils and motivated them in their work back at school. The better teaching builds on such experiences and also includes a range of cross-curricular work. An outstanding lesson provided pupils with role play activities, the writing of a diary, the making of models and the use of ICT to make a presentation, all based on a visit that was relevant to the history curriculum. It also developed their literacy and ICT skills and, as a result, pupils made good progress in several subjects.

Not only is the use of the new computer suite helping to make learning more enjoyable for pupils, but it is also enabling them to develop their skills and this aspect has improved. The use of ICT across the curriculum remains underdeveloped but there is now a curriculum map in place which is providing

teachers with a structure to ensure that ICT supports learning in different subjects. Extra-curricular activities such as the newly formed rounders, dance, LEGO and cartoon clubs are extending the curriculum and again making learning more enjoyable for pupils.

The developing role of the learning mentor has made a significant contribution to the improvement in pupils' behaviour. Older pupils are benefiting from group work in helping to understand their feelings and frustrations and are acquiring skills to deal with them. Support for individual pupils in classes enables them to remain with their peers and not miss out on important parts of the curriculum.

The care given to pupils is good because all the adults show a concern for the personal development of pupils. Lunchtime supervisors, for example, join in with pupils' games and help them to play sensibly together. The academic guidance given to pupils is satisfactory. The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not often indicate to pupils the extent to which they have met the intended outcome of the lesson or the next steps in their learning. The role of pupils in assessing their own work or each other's also remains underdeveloped.

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

- raise standards and improve behaviour by improving the quality of teaching and learning opportunities – satisfactory progress
- raise standards and improve behaviour by ensuring that all pupils' needs are met effectively – satisfactory progress
- raise standards and improve behaviour by ensuring that English, mathematics and ICT are taught through, and used in, other subjects – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has continued to provide the necessary strategic leadership. She has continued to work with staff to create a positive and calm learning environment with clear expectations for good behaviour. The senior leadership team has grown in confidence under her leadership. The members have a better understanding of the responsibilities of leadership. However, they would benefit from greater clarity about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning across the school.

All staff are aware of the detailed post Ofsted action plan. The acting headteacher carefully annotates the plan and it provides a helpful record of developments. She and the deputy headteacher have begun to evaluate the impact of actions taken to raise standards and improve behaviour and this is helping the leadership team to identifying the next steps.

Since April 2006, the deputy headteacher has acted as headteacher for three days a week. She has been supported well by the part-time SEN consultant. The staff are now clearer about the criteria used for identifying pupils with LDD and clear procedures are in place to meet and review pupils' specific needs.

There have been increased opportunities for the leadership team to monitor and evaluate the quality of pupils' learning. Senior staff have monitored planning and assessment folders and completed book trawls. However, there have been limited opportunities for lesson observations or for the sharing of good practice. There is a need for all staff to have further training on what makes for good learning.

The coordination of English, mathematics and ICT is becoming more effective. The senior team have a greater understanding of pupils' performance in English and the implications for teaching and learning. Increasingly, opportunities are planned for pupils to use their English skills across the curriculum but more needs to be done in this area particularly in pupils' presentation of their work. With the support of an advanced skills teacher (AST), the coordinator for ICT has made significant progress in developing an improved ICT curriculum which makes links with other subjects. Work on the teaching of mathematics through other subjects is embryonic and remains an area for development.

The capacity of the governing body to hold the school to account is improving. Governors have received specific training on how to interpret data on standards and achievement. As a result, they have a better grasp of the school's low standards and significant underachievement. In addition, some governors have attended training sessions on their role and how to monitor and evaluate the work of the school.

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

- raise standards and improve behaviour by ensuring that school leaders devise a clear plan of action that focuses on how to improve provision and raise standards – satisfactory progress.

External support

The quality of the LA's support for the school has improved considerably since the last visit and is now good. Actions are having a positive impact on teaching and learning, monitoring and evaluation, and leadership and management. The Intensifying Support Programme consultant, the AST for ICT, the part-time SEN consultant and the link adviser are all well regarded by the staff who show a willingness to work with experts and act upon advice. The LA has provided helpful support to the Foundation Stage staff in the

development of child-initiated activities and the effective use of the outside area. Funding provided by the LA has enabled the early years staff to visit a local primary school to observe good practice in the Foundation Stage. An additional teaching assistant has been employed and trained to deliver specific intervention programmes as a result of LA funding. Early evaluation of the impact of this intervention is positive. The governors have also benefited from training by the link adviser on how to interpret performance data.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities remain those identified in the inspection of July 2005. With regard to these, the school's specific priorities are to:

- ☐ increase the proportion of good teaching
- ☐ focus on how to improve pupils' learning outcomes
- ☐ disseminate good and outstanding practice in learning and teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Learning and Culture for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Linda Rockey
H M Inspector