

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 D Wilson  
The Headteacher  
Yorkswood Primary School  
Kingshurst Way  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B37 6DF

16 May 2006

Dear Mrs Wilson

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF YORKSWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Peter Kemble, Additional Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 April 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 June 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 the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other teachers, the chair of governors, the associate governor responsible for health and safety, the senior learning mentor and two representatives from the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the last monitoring visit in January 2006, there have been no changes to staffing. External support has been increased through the involvement of an additional associate headteacher. One of the two LA advisors has changed.

## Achievement and standards

The school's own assessment data shows that there is still underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school and particularly in Years 4 and 5. Although many pupils do make satisfactory progress and a significant minority make good progress, there are still too many pupils who are not doing as well as they should. However, the progress pupils are currently making, especially in reading, is better than it was at the time of the last monitoring visit. The school's work to improve planning and the teaching of reading are beginning to have an effect in improving the progress most pupils are making in lessons. The gap between what children are attaining and what they are capable of is beginning to close.

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

- raise standards of literacy – satisfactory progress.

## Personal development and well-being

The good behaviour of pupils seen at the time of the previous monitoring visit has been maintained. Pupils are respectful to adults and cooperate well in most lessons. In some lessons pupils lack concentration and become restless because activities are uninteresting. There are still some who are passive learners but a general improvement in the quality of teachers' planning is reducing the number of pupils who lack motivation or show little enthusiasm for learning. Most pupils try hard, listen well, and are keen to answer questions. These good features are the result of clear guidance on behaviour and an effective system of rewards. Learning mentors are able to concentrate less on behaviour and more on implementing new initiatives, for example to involve parents more fully in their children's learning.

Pupils enjoy school. They are generally enthusiastic and particularly enjoy practical tasks and activities. Incidents of bullying or unkind behaviour are rare. Pupils enjoy having visitors in the school and speak confidently and happily to them. Attendance is improving but remains below national averages. Procedures to follow up absences are thorough and links with the education welfare officer are very good. The senior learning mentor regularly reviews procedures and has useful plans to adopt different approaches to improve the attendance and punctuality of the small percentage of pupils whose attendance is still not good enough.

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

- raise the level of attendance by involving parents more constructively – satisfactory progress.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last monitoring visit and more than half of the teaching seen during this visit was good. However, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and too many lessons are unsatisfactory.

Where teaching has improved it is due to better lesson planning, particularly in guided reading. Clear learning objectives and effective use of assessment enable teachers to match work to pupils' different starting points and capabilities. Good lessons reflect the improvements that have been made.

Pupils benefit from a good pace to their learning, interesting activities and high expectations of what they can achieve. For instance, Year 5 pupils made good progress in a mathematics lesson because the teacher encouraged them to complete tasks within a challenging time period. Year 3 pupils remained on task in their discussion groups because the teacher reviewed the objectives with them before the end of the lesson. This led to a very successful final session during which pupils confidently talked about their work and discussed whether or not they had achieved what was expected. Pupils are fully aware of what they are doing and why because the learning objectives are referred to at specific times throughout the lesson. As a result, pupils' learning is meaningful and relevant.

Where lessons are less effective or unsatisfactory, objectives are often imprecise and activities are not sufficiently engaging or motivating. Consequently some pupils become restless and do not concentrate or complete their tasks. A scrutiny of a sample of pupils' English and mathematics books indicates that where pupils' work is unfinished, tasks are not well matched to their needs. This is particularly evident in English for some lower attaining pupils. In mathematics, teachers' expectations of the more able pupils are frequently too low and pupils are given work which is too easy.

The school's new marking policy is beginning to bring about improvements to the way pupils are helped to know what they need to do to improve. However, this is not yet consistent throughout all classes and not all pupils are getting sufficient guidance about how to improve their work. In too many instances teachers' written comments do not provide pupils with good examples of handwriting, punctuation and spelling.

The school has still not approved its own health and safety policy and risk assessments have not been completed for all activities. Targets set for November 2005 have still not been met.

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

- raise the standard of teaching and learning all round - satisfactory progress
- ensure that auditing of health and safety procedures is systematic and that all risks are assessed - inadequate progress.

### Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school have improved significantly since the last monitoring visit. However, the school is still not making good enough use of all the expertise within the school. Leadership and management roles throughout the school are not yet fully developed and responsibilities are not shared appropriately. With the exception of English, the subject leaders are not sufficiently effective in bringing about improvements to teaching and learning.

The headteacher, with the support of an additional consultant headteacher, has begun to monitor the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school with sufficient rigour. Reports of observations are incisive and provide teachers with clear direction for improvement. With further professional development provided by LA advisors and consultants, many teachers are now beginning to improve their work. This is reflected in the improvement in the quality of teaching seen in most classes. However, these observations are not carried out systematically and there is no written recording of the individual lesson grades which are reported to the governing body in summary format. This is likely to make it difficult for the school to monitor the progress of individual teachers effectively.

The school does not yet have a structured programme to monitor teachers' planning and pupils' work. The notes of the few activities carried out last term are simplistic and have no rationale. The school was not able to provide any evidence to show that action points had been followed up.

The governing body is now effective in holding the school to account. As a body and through its scrutiny committee, the school is now being asked challenging questions and to provide concise evidence of improvements. The information provided in response is clear and is enabling the governing body to fulfil its duties effectively. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

### External support

The school has benefited considerably from the good support provided by the LA advisors, consultants, an advanced skills teacher and two consultant headteachers. They have provided appropriate professional development for the teaching staff as well as working alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher to develop their leadership skills.

## Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures - inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Make monitoring and evaluation more comprehensive and systematic in order to raise standards and eliminate underachievement throughout the school.
- Make more effective use of the expertise within the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning and make provision for pupils more consistent.
- Complete all necessary risk assessments without delay.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby  
Her Majesty's Inspector