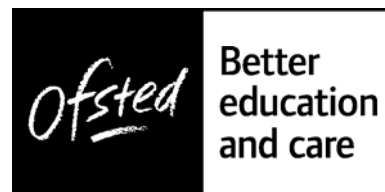


Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Mrs Elizabeth Stanley
The Headteacher
Whitnash Primary school
Langley Road
Leamington Spa
Warwickshire
CV31 2EX

7 June 2006

Dear Mrs Stanley

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WHITNASH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 16 and 17 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

I observed the school's work, 10 lessons or parts of lessons, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, key post holders, pupils, the chair of governors, special educational needs (SEN) governor and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

A teacher, who was previously absent due to ill health, is undergoing a phased return to work but the class, mainly of Year 4 pupils, still has significant amounts of time taught by a supply teacher. In an attempt to establish some continuity for the pupils, the school has managed to secure a consistent supply teacher for the previous half term and the school hopes this

will continue during the phased return. The school has agreed with the LA to work within a deficit budget and has identified a necessary reduction in staff. Redundancy processes have been started.

Achievement and standards

Overall standards are improving slightly although they are still below national expectations. In lessons, a significant number of pupils are failing to reach national expectations for their age. Data collected by the school highlights that too few pupils are on track to reach level 4 or above at the end of Key Stage 2. Work to address the needs of these pupils has been implemented and recent information from work scrutiny has indicated that the school should meet its targets for English and mathematics. Progress for pupils in Year 6 is variable but satisfactory or better for the majority. In Key Stage 1 the percentage of pupils on track to reach national expectations has increased since the last visit. Progress made by the vast majority of the pupils in Year 2 is in line with expectations.

Progress made by all pupils in lessons has improved since the last visit. There is also increased progress evident in work books. However, in some classes there is a significant difference in the progress made by different groups of learners and, for some, it is still not good enough. In some classes for younger pupils those with higher ability are making less progress than they could and older pupils who are below national expectations are sometimes making less than satisfactory progress. In the Foundation Stage the progress made by all children is satisfactory and for many it has been good.

Progress data has improved since the last visit but the original assessments providing the baseline were not reliable and in need of moderation. As a result the data tracking does not present a picture which is consistent with the work scrutiny. The school has significantly improved the teachers' understanding of different levels of attainment and the accuracy of records is developing well.

Changes to the individual education plans for many of the pupils identified for school action has ensured better use of curriculum targets to monitor and evaluate their progress. For pupils with higher levels of need plans focus on diminishing the impact of barriers to learning. These, alongside curriculum targets, provide a good framework with an accurate baseline for monitoring the progress of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

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

- eradicate the underachievement in Years 1 to 6 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Opportunities for spiritual and cultural development are now good. In addition to assemblies and special events, opportunities are being planned more consistently across a range of lessons than at the last visit. In the best practice, teachers very deliberately plan for these aspects in all subjects. They have identified ways of helping pupils increase their awareness and understanding of different cultures as well as providing opportunities for thought and reflection.

Annotated photographs, displays, and other examples of pupils' work show opportunities for spiritual, social and cultural development as well as the pupils' responses to these experiences. The school has collected evidence to demonstrate how pupils are encouraged to understand their own feelings and to develop empathy with others.

Recent pupil questionnaires indicate that pupils generally feel safe and secure at school and are happy with relationships with other pupils and staff. However, in the older age groups there are too many who consider they are sometimes or more often bored at school.

The school council continues to play a positive role in the school. More pupils have been involved in developing the external school environment and they rightly take a great deal of pride in this work.

Attendance has improved slightly and remains in line with the national average for primary schools. The school has identified pupils requiring support to increase their attendance and has strategies in place that have helped some improve. The school needs access to external support to address the needs of a few pupils whose attendance is a serious concern.

Behaviour was good or better in all lessons except one. However, during the inspection two incidents of pupils presenting challenging behaviour occurred. Staff were very effective in dealing with both situations and ensured there was minimal impact on other pupils as well as keeping the pupils involved safe. Procedures, outlined in relevant risk assessments, were known by staff and followed consistently. There was suitable review of both situations and work to help the two pupils involved is ongoing.

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

- improve the attention given to pupils' spiritual and cultural development – good and no longer a cause for concern.

Quality of provision

Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Out of ten lessons six were good, three satisfactory and one was inadequate. Similar improvements were

found by the school's own and LA monitoring. This is a satisfactory improvement since the last visit. There are improvements across the school in work being more carefully matched to the pupils' abilities. There are still some lessons that could provide more challenge for pupils who have the potential to work at higher levels. In these lessons, pupils were busy and actively involved but not learning as much as they could. In a few lessons some pupils were still struggling with concepts and teaching did not help their understanding sufficiently.

Teachers are better at using questions to take the pupils' learning further and gave more opportunities for pupils to improve their answers or explain their reasoning. In the best practice, teachers had high expectations of all pupils. They responded creatively to the pupils' answers and adapted lessons accordingly, whilst keeping a clear focus on the learning objective.

Teachers have a better understanding of pupils' abilities and previous knowledge but some need to address these more accurately. Pupils also have a much clearer understanding of their own targets and how to improve their work. The planned review of targets with pupils and more flexible groupings according to need have helped this. Marking and comments on pupils' work have been improved and now usually provides pupils with ideas of how to improve. In the best practice, comments are followed up and there is evidence of them being acted upon. There is also some good evidence of pupils reviewing their own work.

Short term planning and monitoring ensuring coverage in all subjects has improved since the last visit.

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

- ensure that teaching takes full account of pupils' differing needs – satisfactory
- rectify the weaknesses in the curriculum to ensure proper coverage of subjects – good.

Leadership and management

The staff are being well led. They have accepted the need to improve and are beginning to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. There is now strong team work facilitated by a resolve to support and challenge each other from a professional understanding. This has helped the school move forward.

There is greater shared understanding of the expectations for all pupils and areas for improvement are being highlighted from regular monitoring. Staff have grown in their ability to take a lead in developing school practice.

Governors are providing a more focused challenge based on better understanding of the needs of the school. In response to recent training they have more accurately identified areas where they are lacking expertise and strategies are in place to help address this.

Recent questionnaires indicate that parents are generally positive and supportive of the school. Many want more information about their child's progress and more support in how they can help their own child's learning.

All staff are more reflective and evaluate their practice more often. From sound evaluation the senior team have identified clear priorities: to further develop assessment for learning across the school; plan the curriculum to address the new organisation of the school; and improve data tracking so that information about pupil progress is more accurate. More creative resolutions need to be found to overcome some of the difficulties faced by the school. The class group experiencing disrupted education due to inconsistent staffing this year requires particular attention to help address the delay caused in their progress. Careful planning for the forthcoming staffing changes needs to be in place quickly so that the school's capacity to improve is not reduced.

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

- improve leadership and management and ensure that there is a concerted approach to raising standards through checking and improving provision – good.

External support

The local authority has provided good support for the school. The regular advice and development work has helped to improve provision. Support has been most successful in improving provision when advisers have recognised staff expertise and worked with the staff team to ensure intervention is suitable to the particular needs of the school. The link inspector has worked effectively with the headteacher to change priorities as the school's capacity to improve has grown. New priorities for external support have been identified accurately. The priorities include helping the school to face future challenges arising from the necessary changes to organisation and staffing. Additional support for the school needs to be in place very quickly if it is to have the impact required.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards and achievement by improving the use of assessment so that teaching accurately challenges all pupils and ensures gaps in previous learning are identified and addressed.
- Take swift action to ensure changes in organisation and staffing do not reduce the school's capacity to improve.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families Services for Warwickshire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet Thompson', is written over a thin red vertical line.

Janet Thompson
H M Inspector