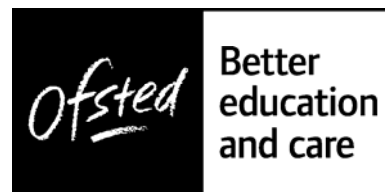


Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Mr Des O'Shea
The Headteacher
St Patrick's Catholic Primary School
Patrick Road
Corby
Northamptonshire
NN18 9NT

19 May 2006

Dear Mr O'Shea

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school with Sally Hall, Additional Inspector, 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, a range of staff, the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority (LA) and groups of pupils.

Context

Difficulties with the recruitment and retention of teachers remain. Half of the current teaching staff was not at the school when it was inspected in June 2005. The interim headteacher is continuing in post until the end of the summer term. The governing body has appointed the current deputy headteacher as substantive headteacher from September 2006. The school is

subsequently in the process of appointing a new deputy headteacher. Following the resignation of two full-time teachers last term, vacancies have been filled with temporary appointments. A robust recruitment process is underway to secure permanent replacements for these posts.

Achievement and standards

In the Foundation Stage, standards are generally in line with what is expected for the children's ages and most children currently make at least satisfactory progress from their different starting points. Some children have made very good progress since they joined the school in September 2005. The school's latest assessments show that most children are already achieving standards usually expected by the end of the school year, especially in their personal and social development.

The 2005 national test results for seven-year-olds were generally above average in reading and writing and exceptionally high in mathematics but the school predicts a considerable shortfall against its targets in the 2006 tests. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are making insufficient progress because of instability in staffing during the year and weaknesses in teaching. Subject leaders in English and mathematics are providing limited additional support for teachers in these year groups to tackle pupils' underachievement.

When compared to schools nationally, standards of attainment at Key Stage 2 in 2005 were broadly average. The overall added value measures between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 indicate satisfactory progress when set alongside schools nationally. Pupils currently in Year 6 make satisfactory progress in lessons. The underachievement of some pupils during the year has been effectively identified and appropriate intervention has successfully offset further slippage. According to the school's latest assessment information the majority of pupils are expected to achieve the school's targets in the 2006 national tests.

The recently introduced daily 'Activate' programme encourages all pupils to arrive promptly and start working immediately. Each session is followed by a short, sharply focused handwriting practice lesson which is having an impact on improving the quality of presentation seen in the pupils' work especially in Key Stage 2.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- raise standards in the Foundation Stage – satisfactory progress
- raise standards in Key Stage 2 – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

The mutual respect and trust shown by staff and pupils promote a strong community spirit throughout the school. Newcomers, including those for

whom English is a new language, are welcomed and accepted into this inclusive school. The pupils have sustained good attitudes to their learning and this has a positive impact on their work. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school so pupils use the time for learning purposefully. However, the impact of staff changes has resulted in some pupils in Key Stage 1 feeling insecure and unsettled.

The leadership team has rightly prioritised the installation of a computerised registration system to provide useful information about pupils' attendance. This had been in operation for just two days at the time of the inspection but already is ensuring that recorded information is accurate. Attendance has improved, during the monitoring visit it was over 92%. The school has not yet developed robust systems to keep track of attendance patterns or to inform parents if their child's absence will or will not be authorised.

Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features including high expectations for behaviour and clear explanations. Lessons begin with most teachers effectively explaining what pupils will learn. At the end of lessons, pupils review how well they have done using 'traffic lights' coding which is working well.

Teachers have begun to regularly use assessment information to identify pupils who are making insufficient progress but more work is needed in this area. Limited, but beneficial, intervention programmes are in place to tackle underachievement. Since the last monitoring visit, targets have been set for all pupils in literacy and numeracy but they are not always written in child-friendly language for the younger pupils. Exercise books are regularly marked and the best marking is thoughtful and formative, highlighting when targets are met.

The whole-school curriculum plan of what is to be taught and when for every year group is inadequate. Insufficient links have been developed between subjects and opportunities are missed in using key skills across the curriculum. This curriculum map is a key planning tool and weaknesses in its construction carry through into the weekly and daily plans written by staff.

There is improved provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). The newly appointed special needs coordinator has made a good start. Individual education plans for pupils are in place and regularly reviewed. The training needs for staff at all levels have been identified but, as yet, a training programme has not been implemented. The provision for pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) has improved satisfactorily. The learning support assistant with responsibility for supporting these pupils has worked hard to develop resources. However, the school is receiving insufficient expert advice from the LA about how to plan learning activities to meet the differing needs of all EAL pupils or how to monitor their progress.

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

- improve teaching in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 – satisfactory progress
- improve teachers' use of assessment to plan their teaching – inadequate progress
- improve the curriculum so that each subject receives enough time to give pupils a worthwhile experience, and that the school meets the recommended time at Key Stage 2 – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The interim headteacher and the current deputy headteacher have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In partnership they regularly monitor and assess the school's progress on priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Realistic but challenging adjustments are made to the plan based on the outcomes of this ongoing self-evaluation. Time-limited targets that are set, communicated to staff and reviewed on a weekly basis have accelerated the rate of progress and change. The outcomes of the school's self-evaluation are not yet recorded in one comprehensive document. The headteacher's well developed management skills keep the school running smoothly on a daily basis in sometimes challenging circumstances.

The leadership team are resolutely focused on raising standards and promoting a caring, supportive ethos for the school community. This is being achieved through intolerance of unsatisfactory teaching as well as a drive to improve systems and procedures for assessment. However, inconsistencies across the school prevail. Middle managers appreciate their accountabilities and have responded positively to what is expected of them. Satisfactory progress has been made in developing the role of subject leaders who are diligently managing their subjects. However, not all subjects have identified leaders to quality assure the school's curriculum.

The governing body has substantially improved its effectiveness through guidance from the headteacher and training and support from the local authority. These have enabled some governors to take leading roles in matters of finance and premises. Governors are successfully providing an appropriate level of challenge and support to the school in raising standards and achievement. The diocese has become more actively involved in supporting the school's improvement plan. Additional finance has had an impact on improving the dilapidated building. The school's leadership and management are currently well placed to impact on the school's further capacity to improve.

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

- improve leadership, management and governance so that there is a clear understanding of the areas where improvement is necessary and that there is appropriate action to bring about the required urgent changes – good progress.

External support

The LA has successfully supported the school in resolving short and long-term staffing difficulties and in securing the school's long-term financial stability. It has also been constructively involved in the school's gradual improvements through regular monitoring visits from advisers and the literacy consultant. The school improvement adviser's monitoring and evaluation are usefully linked to the previous HMI monitoring letter. The LA provides a good level of support to the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed in Key Stage 2.

Priorities for further improvement

- Devise a written curriculum plan that explicitly identifies the required coverage and content of all subjects for each year group including cross-curricular links.
- Further improve the progress pupils make in lessons through sharply focused planning that draws on rigorous assessment to inform their next steps in learning.
- Secure consistency in the quality of teaching for pupils of all ability levels and pupils whose first language is not English.

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

Yours sincerely



Linda Killman
H M Inspector