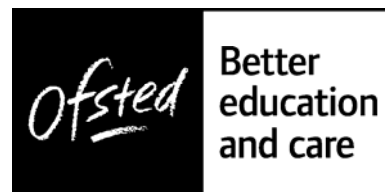


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Ms Nicky Poore
The Headteacher
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7 June 2006

Dear Ms Poore

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GLASCOTE HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Liz Kounnou, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 May 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 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, the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority, the school council and all staff. Lessons and other activities were also observed.

Context

The school is going through a continued period of staffing changes. The number of pupils on roll is in gentle decline; current staffing levels are unlikely to be sustained. There are appropriate plans to cover any anticipated changes. The school continues to serve a mixed housing estate and has fewer

than average levels of pupils who are at an early stage of learning English but slightly higher levels of pupils eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.

Achievement and standards

The school has made significant progress in building a community that is interested in how well the pupils achieve. Although standards remain below average in English and mathematics, there is evidence of significant improvement throughout the school. In particular pupil progress in Years 3 to 6 is considerably better due to improved teaching.

In English standards remain low but are improving rapidly. Pupils can use an increasing range of vocabulary and explain subtle arguments and opinions with growing confidence. This is largely due to increased opportunities for pupils to give extended answers to questions. The standard of writing of the youngest pupils remains low. However, in Key Stage 2 sentence construction is satisfactory and most pupils can write for a variety of purposes. In Years 4 and 5 for example, pupils are able to use vocabulary such as 'pathos' and 'dialogue' in sentences when writing persuasive text designed to attract customers to the school's summer fete.

However, the presentation of written work remains inadequate and the use of punctuation and grammar is variable between classes. Similarly, the standard of spelling is inadequate and pupils have few strategies for checking their accuracy. Standards of reading are improving and are now at least satisfactory and often good. In Year 6, the school expects results in the 2006 national tests to show a much improved performance. In mathematics standards remain a cause for concern. The newly established method of assessing how well pupils understand mathematics is helpful as this has identified areas where knowledge is less secure. These include the use of strategies to solve problems and word puzzles. In some classes too many pupils have a fragile understanding of basic number and cannot always make connections between different aspects of mathematics, for example multiplication and division.

There are also areas where improvement is significant, noticeably mental and oral mathematics. In Year 6 pupils can confidently multiply two digit numbers by 9 mentally and construct and interpret pie charts and other graphs. They can handle data and use spreadsheets and some are able to calculate percentages and use decimals.

Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have improved considerably since the last visit. All teachers use ICT confidently to improve their teaching and pupils of all ages show an ability to use it independently. Pupils use multimedia to present facts, can accurately use word processing and data handling software and use electronic mail facilities. The imaginative

use of an increasing range of resources pervades much of what happens in classrooms.

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

- improve teaching and learning and combat underachievement in Years 3 to 6 – good.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral and social development are much improved and are now good. Throughout the school pupils behave well. In the best lessons pupils enjoy the learning and are keen to take part. When the pace of lessons slows and pupils have few opportunities to play an active part they lose interest and begin to fidget, although their behaviour remains good in these lessons. This is because the majority of teachers praise their efforts and provide rewards which the pupils are keen to gain. Behaviour management is improving, although occasionally it remains overly confrontational. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well. Health and safety have a high priority so that pupils work in a safe environment and there are good arrangements to safeguard the pupils. The school council is proud of its involvement in the school and knows that its ideas are valued and acted upon.

Considerable work has been done to set targets for pupils throughout the school. Targets are displayed prominently in all classrooms and are available on tables as pupils work. There is still room for improvement in the way that pupils are involved in assessing their own progress, particularly in mathematics. Teachers place a high priority now on promoting pupils' personal development. In Year 2, for example, a delightful photograph of the pupil who is 'star of the week' is displayed on the interactive whiteboard during registration. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well in small groups and make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets.

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

- implement effective strategies for improving the behaviour of a minority of pupils – good.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Although there were examples of good and satisfactory teaching, there was no outstanding teaching observed and some inadequate lessons.

In the best lessons, teachers now plan well and in detail. The quality of questioning is good and assessments take place regularly. Relationships

between pupils and teachers are constructive and purposeful and pupils feel confident and secure when seeking help. Teachers now make the purpose of lessons clear so pupils know why they are doing things and, in the best lessons, this is reinforced carefully by reminding pupils at the end what they have learned.

Where teaching was less effective the levels of expectation remain low and the knowledge gained through careful assessment was not always used in planning. As a result, not all pupils made the progress they were capable of. In particular, pupils of high ability make less progress than others. Where teaching was judged to be inadequate this was usually as a result of insecure subject knowledge or curriculum planning. The school has devised appropriate training to address this issue.

The quality of marking has improved but remains variable. In Year 6, pupils are helped to make progress through detailed and accurate comments that are up to date and thoughtful. This is not yet the case in all classes however and some marking remains brief and lacks clear guidance for the pupils.

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Good curriculum opportunities have been developed for the pupils to use ICT that has led to a rise in the standards that pupils achieve. Pupils enjoy using technology such as a digital video camera to record special activities in the school. Year 2 pupils confidently filmed some of the activities taking place at their seaside party. There is good development of literacy skills in some lessons across the curriculum and, in particular, good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. These are helping to raise standards in English. Setting pupils for mathematics in Years 4 and 5 has not yet resulted in sufficient progress in learning because not all the lessons help pupils build on their prior knowledge. In both English and mathematics the curriculum is still not sufficiently well tailored to match the pupils' levels of ability and this holds back their progress. For example, more able pupils are not always challenged well enough to be able to show their true abilities.

The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory with a number of good features. Exciting activities, such as a garden centre, provide children with good opportunities to develop their skills as they play. Lessons to develop personal and social skills are well planned. Children gain confidence in sharing their thoughts and ideas and build friendships with other children. However, a few activities result in children sitting for too long and losing interest. An impressive outdoor area has been created since the last inspection for children to use throughout the day but this is currently underused.

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

- use assessment information to meet pupils' needs and check on their progress – satisfactory

- provide a suitably enriched curriculum that motivates and inspires pupils to learn and encourages them to show initiative – satisfactory
- ensure that provision for ICT meets statutory requirements – outstanding.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school continue to improve and are now satisfactory with elements of good practice. The school's capacity to improve is good.

The leadership of the headteacher remains highly effective and is driving improvement with continued determination. The quality of her leadership has helped establish a secure system of monitoring progress and standards whilst keeping the needs of pupils at the heart of all decision making. She has the confidence of governors, parents and staff. She has an accurate view of what needs to be done and sets a high standard of commitment to improvement. She has completed a detailed and thoughtful analysis of the school's priorities. The school is now poised to use this analysis to evaluate the impact on standards rather than simply to demonstrate progress.

The quality of governance has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now good. The governing body operates a full committee structure which plans ahead and faces challenges, especially financial, with determination. The governors are fully involved in the life of the school, support developments well, and now monitor standards and progress with increased accuracy. Whereas in the past they were sometimes passive and uninformed this is no longer the case. The governors attend training, hold the school to account for its performance, and ensure the school meets all statutory requirements.

The senior managers in school meet weekly to help set the direction of the school's work. This group is increasingly effective and takes a growing responsibility for the school. Roles and responsibilities are now clearly defined. The senior managers have appropriate methods to ensure the imminent school improvement plan is written with the contribution of all staff and retains a focus on standards and progress. They are helping to sustain a sense of ambition in school. However, the process relies heavily on actions but does not always fully evaluate the impact of those actions.

Subject leadership is now satisfactory but some leaders are more aware of what is required than others and, as a result, the quality of leadership in individual subjects is inconsistent. Considerable success has been achieved in ICT, for example, and progress in this area has been rapid. The ICT leader has managed, in a very short period of time, to secure impressive improvement in the use and application of ICT. This high quality leadership is also evident in literacy and the strength of monitoring and analysis is also helping improve progress. All main subject leaders now monitor standards

and progress effectively but do not yet contribute fully to school improvement planning.

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

- improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management – good
- clearly define the roles and responsibilities within the senior management team and add these to the school improvement plan – satisfactory.

External support

The school continues to receive good support from the local authority. This has helped the school to make good progress. Advice has closely matched the areas outlined in the original inspection and the school is appreciative of the range and quality of this support.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Use assessment information in planning to ensure pupils work at the appropriate level in all lessons.
- Increase the challenge for all pupils but especially the more able.
- Increase the rigour of continuous self-evaluation by school leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Children and Lifelong Learning for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan
H M Inspector