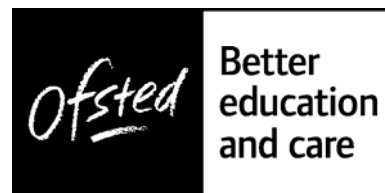


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Mrs Harris and Mrs Snape
The Acting Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher
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29 June 2006

Dear Mrs Harris and Mrs Snape

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WROCKWARDINE WOOD C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Philip Martin, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 June 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 October 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

We met staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA). We analysed documents, visited 15 lessons and an assembly, talked to the pupils about their work and observed them during playtimes. In the light of this evidence, we made the following observations to the deputy headteacher, the acting headteacher, the chair of governors and two representatives from the LA.

Context

The governors have accepted the headteacher's resignation and they are hoping to appoint a new headteacher in the first week of July. It has been anticipated that the new headteacher may not be able to start until January 2007. Suitable contingency arrangements have been made until the new headteacher is in post. The consultant will assist the school on the same basis as now and the LA will continue its current level of support.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is improving but is still inadequate for many of the pupils. There is a wide spread of ability in the mixed age classes and the teaching does not take sufficient account of this. Consequently, there is underachievement, which is particularly affecting the older and the more able pupils.

Although standards in speaking and listening are still below age-related expectations, the pupils are becoming more confident in talking in a range of contexts. The regular opportunities they have to talk about issues with their partners helps them to understand the value of discussing ideas and learn from each other. However, pupils are not yet skilled enough in posing questions, developing their ideas, and justifying their opinions. This has a knock-on effect on their writing which is not sustained to sufficient length or organised well enough to capture the reader's interest. Handwriting and spelling are holding back the progress of some pupils. Handwriting has not been taught systematically and so some of the pupils are not clear enough about how to join their letters and this slows down the pace of their writing. Although there has been more emphasis on spelling since the last monitoring visit, the pupils are still not as familiar as they should be with spelling rules and patterns.

Progress in reading is improving, particularly since the teachers are now including a specific lesson every day to target particular groups of pupils. However, some of the pupils still do not have enough strategies to tackle unfamiliar words and this slows them down. The new library is a very attractive area and is potentially useful resource but needs to be used more regularly if the pupils are to develop their own research skills and broaden their reading tastes. Achievement in mathematics is showing signs of improvement, particularly in the mental and oral elements of the lesson. The pupils' skills in calculation are also developing well. However, pupils do not always apply what they know when tackling problems and investigations.

Personal development and well-being

These aspects continue to be strong. The pupils enjoy being at school and they behave well in class and at other times. However, as observed during the previous visit, a few pupils do not readily join in whole class question and

answer sessions and some boys do not give of their best. Attendance was good in the last full academic year, but has suffered a dip this year because of a bout of sickness in the winter which affected the area. The rate of unauthorised absence is lower than average.

Pupils are increasingly aware of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and these messages are reinforced well through lessons, clubs, and advice from visitors. The pupils make a good contribution to the school community through taking on responsibilities and through the work of the school council. They are also involved in parish events and collect for various charities.

The pupils are encouraged to work in groups and pairs and this helps them to see others' points of view and to respect different opinions. A clear improvement in personal development is that pupils are beginning to evaluate each others' work. This is very successful. One comment from a pupil, 'I really enjoyed reading your story. I think you have used punctuations very well. You need to add a bit more description at the beginning and don't put speech in the story so quick', encouraged the writer to improve his next piece of work. Although the pupils are developing their capabilities to evaluate each other's work, they are not so diligent in checking and improving their own writing.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues to be satisfactory. Four of the 15 lessons were good, an improvement on the previous visit. Particular improvements were seen in the quality and depth of the teaching at the beginning of lessons. Teachers share lesson objectives with pupils at the start of lessons and provide written prompts to remind them of their expectations for the remainder of the lesson.

Teachers continue to have good relationships and encourage the pupils to contribute. Nonetheless, too many pupils are passive during whole-class sessions and there are still too few opportunities for developing speaking and, particularly, listening skills.

The school is improving its assessment procedures and the teachers are using this information more constructively in their planning. However, there are still some shortcomings in the way work is matched to the needs of the more able pupils and so these pupils do not make enough progress. The quality of marking has improved, particularly in English. In the best examples, teachers offer clear advice about how well the pupil has done in relation to the learning intention.

In a minority of lessons, teachers' knowledge of the subject and how to teach it is limiting the progress pupils make. For example, in science lessons aimed at developing investigative skills, the important area of encouraging independence in investigations was neglected.

The curriculum continues to be satisfactory. Improvements from the last visit are evident in how the curriculum is planned to make links between subjects. This is especially true of links between English and other subjects. For example, a visit to a local historic market town was used very effectively to promote writing skills and an understanding of history. However, links with mathematics and other subjects are not so apparent and lessons do not make the best use of real life mathematical problems as well as they might. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' knowledge of safe and healthy lifestyles and to other aspects of personal development. The school has recently received awards for its promotion of emotional health and well-being.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and improving. Pupils feel safe in school. They know who to turn to if they are troubled or upset and are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously. Pupils' understanding of their own targets has improved so they have a better idea of how well they are doing.

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

- ensure that planning for teaching and learning matches the needs of pupils so that they do as well as they should, particularly in writing and mathematics for the more able pupils – satisfactory
- develop marking and other assessment practice so that pupils are much clearer about what they need to do to improve their work – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The senior team are providing effective strategic leadership and show improving capacity to take the school forward. The leadership team has continued to promote clear expectations for good behaviour and develop the distinctive Christian ethos of the school which was recognised by the recent diocesan inspection. The sense of teamwork is clearly apparent and staff are growing in confidence.

School leaders have been quick to respond to the issues identified in the last monitoring letter and signs of improvement stemming from their own evaluation are also apparent. One such improvement is the tracking of pupils' progress. The improved tracking system is the result of many hours of hard work and is starting to become an effective tool for school improvement. The staff can now see, at a glance, those pupils who have made good progress, those making expected progress, and those who have not made enough headway. The data is being analysed to establish why the progress of some pupils is better than others and action is being taken in the light of this information. It is as yet too early to see the impact of this work in terms of improved standards, but the groundwork is now there. It is becoming clear that pupils make better progress in some classes than in others.

Senior teachers are now more closely involved in whole school issues and their skills in strategic leadership are developing. They have begun to visit lessons, analyse pupils' work and review teachers' planning. This is helping them to get a clearer understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve. Actions plans are being drawn up but they lack clear overall targets and evaluation strategies.

The governors continue to offer their unstinting support to the school and their capacity to hold the school to account is improving. They are developing their roles as critical friends effectively through regular visits and their effective committee structure. The chair of governors has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is very keen to maintain the positive atmosphere and staff morale.

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

- improve the effectiveness of self-evaluation so that weaknesses in standards are identified and tracked rigorously – good.

External support

The local authority's support for the school is good. The regular visits from advisers and consultants have enabled the staff to develop their expertise and consequently improve practice. Recent training from the LA has had a beneficial impact on the way that reading is taught and assessed. The LA's support for subject leaders is beginning to have an impact. They are starting to show the potential to manage their areas of responsibility more thoroughly, but need more help to draw up strategic plans, monitor their progress, and evaluate their impact.

The LA has offered financial help and expertise to the school and so some refurbishment can continue despite the budget deficit. A three year plan has been agreed to enable the school to eradicate its deficit and return to a small surplus.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the proportion of good teaching.
- Reduce underachievement, particularly of more able pupils.
- Continue to develop the role of subject leaders.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Telford & Wrekin and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Lichfield.

Yours sincerely

Mary E Hamby
Her Majesty's Inspector