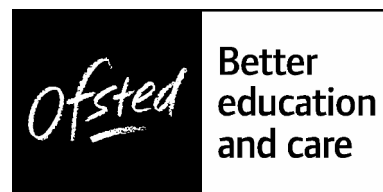


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Mrs T Ruddle  
The Headteacher  
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14 June 2006

Dear Mrs Ruddle

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CORNGREAVES JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Clive Lewis, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, the vice chair of governors, the local authority (LA) governor and a representative from the LA.

### Context

There has been five new staff appointed since the previous monitoring visit. Three new assistant headteachers took up post in April 2006. Three quarters of the current teaching staff were not at the school when it was inspected in October 2005. The consultant headteacher is continuing in post until the end

of the summer term 2007. 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

The children's attainment on entry to the school is well below average. Children in the Foundation Stage make inadequate progress with standards attained significantly below national expectations. Standards in speaking and listening are particularly weak. The pupils tend to answer questions in short or incomplete sentences and use limited vocabulary when describing experiences.

Achievement in English and mathematics is showing signs of improvement in Key Stage 1 but remains well below average. Writing has improved since the last inspection but it is still not progressing quickly enough. The pupils' ability to write at length is hampered because not enough opportunities are provided for sustained writing activities. Also, the pupils' limited vocabulary affects the quality of their writing as well as their speaking skills.

Teacher assessments for the end of Key Stage 2 national tests indicate that pupils are expected to attain well below national expectations in English and mathematics. Scrutiny of current work and lesson observations in Years 3, 5 and 6 show that progress is being made, particularly in English, as a result of improvement in the quality of teaching and an increased emphasis on regular assessment. In most cases pupils are able to identify what level they are working at and what they need to do to improve but inconsistency between classes remains. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make unsatisfactory progress due to weaknesses in provision.

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

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school, but particularly at the end of Year 2 – satisfactory
- ensure that all groups and individual pupils make at least satisfactory progress – satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

Relationships in all classrooms are generally positive and in particular, older pupils cooperate well with each other. In lessons, pupils are often asked to work with a partner and usually manage this well. The pupils are becoming more involved in their own learning by reflecting on what they have learned. The pupils feel safe and secure because of effective procedures and policies for dealing with racism and bullying, so that they feel confident that there are adults they could turn to if they need help. The support for pupils with

learning difficulties and additional needs is weak and consequently these pupils do not make as much progress as they should.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory overall. Although a number of good lessons were observed, some inadequate teaching remains. Good lessons were well structured, had a brisk pace, and pupils were given ample opportunities to apply and consolidate learning. This was particularly effective where pupils had the opportunity to refine and discuss ideas in small groups or pairs.

Importantly, teachers have high expectations and focus on pupils' progress during the lesson, identifying clearly what pupils need to learn at each stage. For example, in a particularly effective mathematics lesson the teacher made effective use of a 'Killer Question' technique to gauge how much progress the pupils had made during the lesson and accurately assess where the pupils needed to go next.

The teachers have clear guidelines on how to provide work at the appropriate level for their pupils and this has enabled them to improve their planning. As a result, the majority of lessons were well planned and firmly based on national strategies. At the start of lessons teachers effectively explain what pupils will learn. However, teachers do not always make best use of the end of lessons to challenge and extend pupils' thinking and this constrains learning.

Where teaching is less effective, planning follows the school's policy but is not modified to meet pupils' needs and work is insufficiently challenging to promote rapid gains in their learning. Time is not used effectively, resulting in pupils not having enough to do. Teachers now regularly use assessment information to identify pupils who are making insufficient progress but more work is needed in this area as there are no intervention programmes in place to tackle underachievement.

There are some good examples of target setting and analytical marking but these are inconsistent across the school. For example, targets are set for all pupils in literacy and numeracy. However, they are not always written in language that the pupils can easily understand. As a result not all pupils know what they need to do to improve their work or how to achieve their targets.

Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning because they are well informed and usefully employed.

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

- improve the overall quality of teaching by ensuring that lesson activities are matched to the needs of all pupils, so that they do as well as they should – good
- continue to develop the use of data from assessment to track pupils' progress and set challenging targets for pupils of all abilities – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

The headteacher has remained determined and positive throughout a very difficult period and has provided good leadership. Frank discussions with staff have involved the headteacher communicating her expectations clearly and consequently a number of staff left the school at Easter. New appointments have been made to replace staff. Importantly the headteacher observed the candidates teaching to determine their suitability.

Since the previous monitoring visit, the headteacher has taken a number of effective actions to reduce the amount of inadequate teaching. She has established an appropriate system for monitoring and evaluating teaching including regular lesson observations and work scrutiny. The joint observations carried out with Her Majesty's Inspector confirm the headteacher's accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.

The recent appointments of three assistant headteachers have significantly strengthened the senior leadership of the school. They have clear roles and responsibilities and have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards across the school. They provide good role models for other staff to emulate. In the short time since their appointment, they have carried out lesson observations and scrutinised teachers' planning and children's work. This new staffing structure sensibly addresses the weaknesses in leadership and management identified in the previous monitoring visit. However, there remains a weakness in the leadership of special educational needs. The headteacher has put in place measures to remedy this but, as yet, these initiatives are too new to have any discernable impact. However, the new special educational needs leader has a good understanding of the need to focus on the progress of these groups of pupils and to improve the systems and structures to support them.

Governors are successfully providing an appropriate level of challenge and support to the school in raising standards and achievement.

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

- establish and develop the management roles of all staff so that they have a more accurate knowledge of the school – good.

## External support

The LA has been supportive in successfully resolving the immense staffing difficulties apparent at the time of the previous monitoring visit. It has also been constructively involved in the school's gradual improvements through regular monitoring visits from advisors. However, the monitoring arrangements need to be more frequent in order to secure decisive intervention where progress is not good enough. The evaluation criteria still lack clarity and are not well enough defined to help the LA fully evaluate the school's progress. Moreover, the governors remain unsure as to the long term future of the school and this is hampering their plans to provide a permanent, sustainable, strategic leadership of the school.

## Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage in order for children to make better progress.
- Introduce effective intervention programmes to tackle underachievement of pupils.
- Improve strategies to identify and support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Chief Education Officer for Sandwell.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline K Wordsworth  
H M Inspector