

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 Anne Bell
The Headteacher
St Edmund's Catholic Primary School
Rosebery Street
Birmingham
B18 7PA

5 June 2006

Dear Mrs Bell

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

Introduction

Following my visit with Eileen Chadwick, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17 and 18 May 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 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 acting headteacher, the previous acting headteacher, the seconded deputy headteacher, the substantive deputy headteacher, other school staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

When the school was placed in special measures in November 2005, the substantive headteacher, who has now resigned, was absent from school. The acting headteacher, who had been seconded to the school, left the school at the end of the autumn term. A second acting headteacher was

seconded to the school for the spring term 2006. From the beginning of the summer term 2006, the first acting headteacher returned to the school for three days each week. This acting headteacher is being supported by a deputy headteacher who has been seconded to the school full time and who takes charge for two days each week. The school's substantive deputy headteacher is still in post. One teacher has left the school and this post has been filled with a teacher on a temporary contract.

The governing body has made three attempts to appoint a new headteacher but has, so far, failed to attract a suitable candidate.

Achievement and standards

There is still significant underachievement in English and mathematics throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils' work clearly shows that too many pupils are not achieving as much as they could. Standards of handwriting are low and the work that many pupils produce is still poorly presented. The school's work to improve planning so that work is more accurately matched to pupils' individual needs has not had sufficient effect in improving the progress pupils make. The gap between what pupils are attaining and what they are capable of is not closing quickly enough.

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

- raise standards in Years 1 to 6 and remedy the weaknesses in English and mathematics – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being remain satisfactory. Pupils behave well when moving around the school and are well mannered at all times. They want to learn and respond particularly well when their learning tasks are challenging and relevant. However, many pupils become restless and lack concentration when the work they are given is too easy or too hard. They cooperate particularly well when provided with opportunities to share ideas and they enjoy working to time deadlines. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to work independently.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching remains inadequate. There is evidence of good teaching but too much is still unsatisfactory in Years 1 to 6. Good teaching in Year 5 helps the pupils to make better progress. In the most effective lessons, teachers provide interesting learning contexts and have high expectations of all pupils. They provide work which is well matched to the individual pupils' abilities so they achieve their best throughout all parts of the lesson. They involve pupils in their learning by making good use of resources

and providing opportunities for pupils to share ideas and extend their thinking through discussion.

Where teaching is less effective, lessons are often mundane and too much time is devoted to listening to instructions and carrying out repetitive exercises. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop different learning styles, including ones where they can explore ideas and solve problems. Teachers' subject knowledge often restricts their ability to extend pupils' learning. Teachers have not had sufficient in depth subject training in English and mathematics to bring them up to date and they have not had enough support to improve their teaching. For instance, in literacy several teachers did not make the best use of time during group work and spent too long helping individuals rather than teaching groups. Too many pupils lost learning time when queuing for help. In literacy, group work often does not continue the theme of the whole class introduction and lacks relevance and meaning for pupils.

Teachers' planning has improved recently to take more account of pupils' different abilities. However, in lessons, teachers do not match pupils' work well enough to their previous attainment. Lower attaining pupils often make slow progress during lesson introductions because work is too hard. There is still an over-reliance on worksheets and pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length. Many of the more capable pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons.

Too much teaching is repetitive and teachers do not take sufficient account of prior learning when planning their lessons. Assessment systems are still at an early stage in reading, writing and mathematics. These do not yet give a clear picture of pupils' current abilities and progress. The setting of targets so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work is not consistent through the school. The recently introduced marking policy is not followed in all classes and marking does not always show pupils what they need to do to improve. It rarely refers to how well pupils are achieving their targets.

The school has continued to provide good care for its pupils and now fully meets procedures for child protection.

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

- improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6 – inadequate
- ensure there is a teacher in the school who is trained in child protection procedures – this area for improvement has been met in full.

Leadership and management

Although significant improvements have been made to pupils' behaviour and to the learning environment, the standard of teaching and the progress pupils make have not changed significantly from the time of the last inspection. The

school has not yet established a culture of rigorous self-evaluation to enable it to improve quickly enough.

The school's leaders and the LA have carried out a range of activities to monitor the work of the school. They have accurately identified areas of weakness in teaching and learning, making appropriate suggestions for improvement. However, these have not been followed up with sufficient rigour and teaching and learning are not improving quickly enough.

Lesson observations are not used systematically to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers have not been given enough guidance to help them to teach better. Where lessons have been observed, written feedback for teachers has not been sufficiently evaluative and the targets set have not been used well enough to develop teaching skills. Where there are aspects of good teaching, these have not been used effectively to raise the quality of teaching throughout the school. As a result there is still too much teaching that is not good enough and too many pupils are not making as much progress as they could.

The school is beginning to collect information about pupils' achievements. However, it does not have a robust system to monitor the progress of individual pupils. Information from assessments is not collated or analysed thoroughly and, as a result, the school is unable to identify specific areas of underachievement.

The school has prepared an action plan for improvement. This addresses the issues raised in the last inspection report. However, it does not provide sufficient detail of the incremental steps the school needs to take in order to improve quickly enough. The lack of specific and measurable success criteria is likely to make it difficult for the school to monitor progress. There are a number of vacancies on the governing body and it is unable to be fully effective because it is not provided with sufficiently clear information about the progress the school is making.

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

- take a more rigorous approach to addressing areas of weakness – inadequate.

External support

The diocese and the local authority have been effective in facilitating the secondment of two acting headteachers and a deputy headteacher during the past year to support the leadership of the school. This has enabled the school to bring about significant improvements to pupils' behaviour and to the fabric of the school buildings. Work has begun to improve teaching and learning, but improvements in the progress that pupils make as a result of this work are not happening quickly enough.

The local authority's statement of action is satisfactory. It identifies appropriate support for the school in each area of improvement. Regular monitoring and evaluation activities are planned throughout the period of support, but the lack of precise and measurable targets is likely to make it difficult for the LA to evaluate efficiently the improvements made.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Quality of LA's statement of action – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by identifying a shared understanding of the features of good teaching and providing appropriate professional development for each teacher.
- Plan and implement a rigorous and systematic programme of monitoring and evaluation in order to raise standards and eliminate underachievement throughout the school.
- Make full use of assessment data to track the progress of all pupils in order to highlight areas of underachievement.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Learning and Culture for Birmingham and the Director of Education for the diocese of Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
H M Inspector