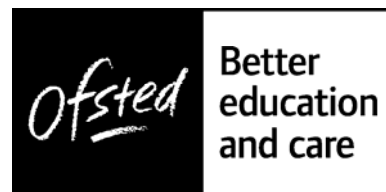


Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Mrs D Mitchell
The Acting Headteacher
St Barnabas C of E First and Middle School
Stonebow Road
Persnore
Worcestershire
WR10 2AW

15 June 2006

Dear Mrs Mitchell

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST BARNABAS C OF E FIRST AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with John Lilly and Charlotte Roberson, Additional Inspectors, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2006.

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, observed lessons, scrutinised documents, and met with you, the previous acting headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the English, mathematics and science subject leaders, the chair of governors, one other governor, the headteacher designate and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

Following the school's inspection in January 2006 the headteacher resigned and an acting headteacher was appointed until the end of the spring term 2006, when she returned to her own school. A new chair of governors was

elected, also in the spring term. In April you were appointed as acting headteacher until the end of the summer term, when you will also return to your own school. In the interim period the governors have been successful in recruiting a permanent headteacher who is expected to take up his post at the beginning of the autumn term 2006. At the end of the spring term 2006 a Year 6 teacher resigned and two other teachers will be leaving the school at the end of the summer term 2006.

Achievement and standards

Standards range from above to below average and overall are generally in line with what is expected for the pupils' ages. The pupils' achievements, however, are far too variable. In Key Stage 1 most pupils achieve well and make good progress but this is not built on well enough in the lower end of Key Stage 2 where the pupils' overall progress is too slow. Whilst some pupils achieve well, others make very little progress and some fall further behind in their work. Rates of progress pick up in Years 5 and 6 although there is inconsistency between classes and year groups. Some groups of pupils make good and occasionally exceptional progress whilst the achievement of others is far more modest. A significant proportion of pupils, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 7, continues to underachieve because of weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.

Personal development and well-being

Many pupils are mature, articulate and confident young people who readily engage in conversations about their work. The majority behave really well and are polite and courteous to visitors, showing respect to adults and each other. Nevertheless there is a small minority of pupils, mostly in Year 7 who does not behave well enough. During one lesson these pupils were uncooperative, rude and generally disruptive.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory and overall it is inadequate. Whilst some of the teaching is consistently good and of a high quality, too much is mediocre and failing to provide pupils with sufficient challenge and interest.

In the best lessons, teachers use questions effectively to probe the pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. Expectations are high, there is a good pace of learning, and relationships are very positive. A variety of teaching methods and strategies are used well to motivate and engage the pupils. Teachers' planning is good and the pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn.

In the weakest and unsatisfactory lessons teachers' expectations are far too low and the pace of learning is very slow. The pupils' work is not matched

well enough to different learning needs and there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and make decisions. On occasions, pupils' misconceptions and inaccurate responses are not corrected and there is insufficient direct teaching of key skills.

The quality of teachers' written marking of the pupils' work is far too variable and inconsistent. There are examples of good quality marking where pupils are given helpful feedback about how to improve their work. However, there are too many occasions when the pupils' work is unmarked, errors are not corrected, and pupils are not given enough support to know what they need to do next. Whilst some pupils present their work neatly and to a high standard, poor quality presentation is evident in too many books and is not challenged sufficiently.

The curriculum is generally satisfactory although the quality of short term planning is far too variable. In some classes and year groups it is very good whilst in others lesson planning does not take enough account of the pupils' different starting points and capabilities. The level of challenge provided for the higher attaining pupils is not yet consistently good enough. The provision for outdoor play in the Foundation Stage is poor. The youngest pupils have very few opportunities for planned and purposeful teaching and learning activities outdoors.

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

- improve the quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 in English, mathematics and science in order to challenge all pupils effectively, particularly the most capable, and to raise standards – inadequate.

Leadership and management

The previous acting headteacher and you have brought much needed short term leadership and direction to the school's work. Day to day management is secure and there is an increasingly clear focus on tackling the school's most pressing priorities. The school is a calm, orderly and welcoming community providing a safe learning environment for all pupils. Your self-evaluation shows a good understanding of what actions need to be taken to improve the quality of education, particularly the need to make more effective use of assessment information to monitor the achievements of all pupils. Similarly, and as a result of discussions during this inspection, you have already begun to make important changes to the monitoring programme to reflect a greater sense of urgency in eliminating weaknesses, particularly in teaching.

The action plan provides a sound framework for further improvement, although some success criteria do not reflect the urgent need to eradicate underachievement particularly in Key Stage 2. Some good work has been done to introduce more systematic approaches to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning although these have not yet had

sufficient impact in eliminating weaknesses in teaching and eradicating the persistent underachievement in some year groups. Teachers are given feedback about the quality of their work but their targets for improvement are often not prioritised and sometimes too numerous. In addition, some points for consideration and areas for development do not provide teachers with sufficiently precise and unambiguous direction so that they know exactly what they are required to improve.

There is not a sufficiently clear, shared and agreed sense of educational direction and purpose. Some important policies, such as the policy for collective worship, are out of date and, as a result, teachers' practice is inconsistent. Similarly, job descriptions have not been revised to reflect the school's current circumstances and to make sure that all senior teachers are given unequivocal direction and clear objectives against which their performance can be evaluated.

Subject leadership in English, mathematics and science is beginning to improve. This has led to a greater consistency in planning, particularly in English and mathematics. Some useful analyses of the end of key stage test results and other assessments have taken place. This has led to changes in short term planning and a better understanding of how well the pupils are doing. The deputy headteacher is taking a more prominent role in observing lessons and working well with you to develop more effective arrangements for checking the school's performance. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done in order for the subject leaders and the deputy headteacher to improve their role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching and learning on pupils' achievements.

Assessment information is not being used effectively enough to hold teachers to account for the standards achieved by the pupils in their care or to celebrate pupils' success. Arrangements for tracking the pupils' progress and monitoring achievements are at a very early stage of development. The school is unlikely to meet the action plan target date of the summer term 2006 for implementing systems to track pupils' achievement for each year group and class. Much remains to be done to embed a culture of collective responsibility and individual accountability across the school.

Governors are beginning to develop and improve their role in monitoring and evaluation. Some governors have worked with the senior leadership team to increase their understanding about good quality teaching and learning. The chair of governors recognises the need for all governors to be closely involved in holding the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils. There are appropriate plans to work with the headteacher and senior staff to develop more effective systems for tracking pupils' progress and achievement.

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

- improve leadership and management at all levels by implementing more rigorous procedures for evaluating the school's effectiveness in eradicating underachievement – inadequate

External support

The quality of the local authority's support for the school is satisfactory overall. Numerous subject advisers, consultants and the school's link inspector have provided a good level of support and help, although the impact of this work in improving teaching and learning and eliminating underachievement has been more limited.

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory. There is a comprehensive package of support, training and advice to help the school improve. The LA has also identified a number of 'progress indicators' to help measure the impact of actions in relation to raising standards. Nevertheless, there is insufficient reference to how the LA expects its support to contribute to eliminating underachievement in Key Stage 2. Similarly, there is very little mention of raising standards in Years 3, 4, 5 and 7 and how the school might measure its success in removing underachievement in these year groups.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency, use assessment information more effectively to track the pupils' progress, eradicate remaining underachievement and establish greater levels of accountability amongst all teachers.
- Similarly, take a more rigorous approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning by eliminating persistent weaknesses.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Worcester and the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters
Her Majesty's Inspector