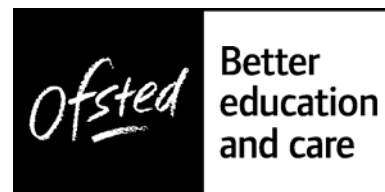


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Miss F Buchan
The Headteacher
St Peter and St Paul C of E Primary School
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30 June 2006

Dear Miss Buchan

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST PETER AND ST PAUL C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with John Paull and Susan Walsh, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 21 and 22 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, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, nominated staff, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The school has faced a period of considerable staffing instability over the past two years. Following a number of recent changes, staffing is now more settled: the deputy headteacher started in January; a coordinator for special educational needs was appointed at Easter; three teachers have left and been

replaced; and, one teacher remains on long term absence. The school's senior management team has been restructured for September.

Achievement and standards

The achievement and attainment of pupils in national tests in 2005 were significantly below average. However, this picture has improved. Pupils make at least satisfactory, and often good, progress in lessons across all age groups. School assessment data indicates that the pupils' rates of progress over time have increased. Standards are therefore rising. Specific short term steps have been taken to raise standards with booster classes for English, mathematics and science for Year 6 pupils. However, it is unlikely that the recent improvements in the school's provision will have a significant impact on the 2006 test results.

Improvements in teaching have addressed the widest inconsistencies in the rates of pupil progress. Work seen in lessons was broadly in line with age related expectations and the quality of learning was generally good. There was no significant difference in the rates of progress of different groups of pupils: those with learning difficulties and disabilities were well supported so that they could access work and make suitable gains in learning. Nonetheless, the pattern of improvement remains rather uneven across the school.

Procedures for tracking the pupils' progress are more systematic and thorough. Moreover, this information is more reliably based on accurate and suitably moderated assessments of work in English and mathematics. Teachers use cohort profiles to set challenging targets and assessment information is beginning to be used effectively to monitor pupils' progress. Assessment is properly underpinned by good target setting. All pupils have specific literacy and numeracy targets and are actively involved in reviewing their own progress and understand what they need to do to improve.

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

- raise standards in English and mathematics and improve pupils' progress – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' personal development and well-being have improved and are good. Pupils behave very well around the school, in the dining hall, in assembly, and in lessons. They are considerate to visitors and to each other. Improvements in teaching have had a perceptible impact on their attitudes to learning: many pupils commented that they enjoy their work and appreciate the detailed guidance that teachers provide with marking and target setting. Exciting lessons capture pupils' imaginations and motivate them to work hard. Specific strategies, such as paired talk and carefully planned group work, have been successful in engaging pupils in lessons. The pupils' social, moral

and cultural development is well met. Outstanding spiritual development was observed in Year 6 when pupils wrestled with understanding the motivation for fasting and prayer within Christian and Muslim religions. Pupils were able to express mature, well considered opinions in order to debate some very complex ideas. Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as being members of the sports council and organising various activities. They make a very good contribution to both the school and the local community.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and is good. Although some weaknesses remain, there is some outstanding teaching. The most obvious improvements have been made in planning, target setting, and assessment. Lesson plans are more sharply focused and detailed, particularly with regard to how the pupils will learn most effectively. Lessons consequently have a much better variety of learning activities, many of which actively involve the pupils in their learning. Most work is suitably differentiated with support planned for individuals and groups that need it. The role of teaching assistants is generally well planned and effective.

Excellent relationships between adults and pupils enable teachers to sustain a good pace in lessons. In a few lessons, however, younger pupils were expected to listen for too long and teacher input lacked the essential sparkle to engage and stimulate the pupils.

Work is very well marked, with teachers following agreed practice. A wide range of strategies is employed, such as pupils highlighting the comment, writing a reply, or following written instructions. The pupils' evident enjoyment is engaging them in their own learning and adding further to the progress that they make. Pupils report that they enjoy reading their teachers' comments, not only because of the encouragement that they receive, but because it makes them feel 'grown-up' and tells them what to do next. High quality marking also ensures that teachers know pupils' learning needs well.

The newly appointed special educational needs coordinator has brought about significant improvements in provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities within a very short time. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning English are also better supported. Teachers now have much clearer guidance on how to identify, support and track the progress of pupils with special needs. The quality of pupils' individual education plans has improved, although occasionally targets are too broad and they are not always used effectively to guide learning in lessons.

The training and deployment of teaching assistants has strengthened the quality of support in lessons; most is good and some is excellent in reinforcing and extending pupils' learning. However, on occasions the support of additional adults is not effective because this does not provide pupils with

enough challenge. The school is working well with outside agencies to meet the requirements of pupils with very specific needs.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and is developing in response to targeted support and guidance.

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

- make better use of assessments to plan lessons that provide sufficiently challenging work for all pupils – satisfactory
- sharpen teachers' marking so that pupils know how to improve their work and make sure that challenging targets are set to help their next steps in learning – good
- provide effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English – good.

Leadership and management

The school's leadership has strengthened significantly since the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a shared vision for improvement and provide clear strategic leadership. Their clarity of purpose has enabled all senior managers to use their time more efficiently and to focus staff more sharply on priorities for improvement, for example in meetings. The roles of other managers have been clarified, with responsibilities suitably delegated, although the leadership roles of subject leaders and curriculum managers remain underdeveloped. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have led well the drive to raise standards by focusing on improving the quality of teaching. Staff morale, although still rather fragile, has improved. The fact that teachers have worked so hard, and as a team, has enabled good practice to spread quickly. Staff have responded positively to the intensive programme of support and the more rigorous monitoring. Common procedures, although not universally popular, have had a significant impact on the overall quality of teaching.

School development planning is sound. Areas for improvement have been systematically addressed and strengthening the Foundation Stage has been sensibly added as a discrete area for development. School self-evaluation is effective because it is soundly based on more systematic, rigorous and analytical monitoring procedures. These strengthened systems and more comprehensive assessment information have contributed positively to the school's capacity for self improvement.

The role of governing body has been strengthened. Governors are regular visitors, are more knowledgeable about the different areas of the school's work, and are, therefore, in a stronger position to hold the school to account. An additional LA governor has been appointed.

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

- improve the rigour of monitoring procedures to ensure that all teachers implement the school's agreed curriculum, policies and procedures – good.

External support

The local authority's statement of action sets out an appropriate programme of support for the school. Since the last inspection the school has made use of consultants from the local authority to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the core subjects. This advice and support has been sharply focused and timely, and generally well received by the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Quality of LA's statement of action – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further strengthen provision in the Foundation Stage.
- Focus more sharply on evaluating the quality of learning and pupils' progress when evaluating teaching and judging achievement over time.
- Develop the strategic leadership of middle managers and subject coordinators.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Diocesan Director of Education for Leicester and the Director of Children and Young People Services for Leicestershire.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
H M Inspector