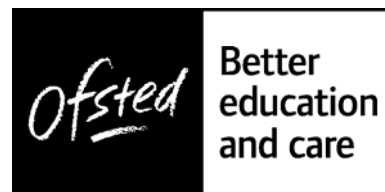


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Mrs W Marriott
The Acting Advisory Headteacher
Four Acres Primary School
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5 July 2006

Dear Mrs Marriott

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF FOUR ACRES PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Malcolm Greenhalgh, Additional Inspector, 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 a sample of books, and met with the acting headteacher, a range of staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and the link school improvement officer from the local authority (LA).

Context

The acting advisory headteacher will remain in post until a permanent headteacher is appointed. This will be after the school is removed from special measures. In Key Stage 2 one teacher has resigned and two others are on long term sickness absence. These posts are currently filled by

temporary teachers. The chair of governors has resigned and a new chair and vice chair have been in post since May 2006.

Achievement and standards

Provisional results from the Key Stage 1 teacher assessments indicate that standards remain below national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Although standards are lower than last year in reading and mathematics they have improved significantly in writing. At Key Stage 2 the school expects standards to remain below national expectations in English and science but to be close to national expectations in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

The school is orderly and calm and the pupils' behaviour is generally good. There have been no exclusions since the acting headteacher took up her post. Some pupils still express concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils in the playground and at break times in quiet areas. Pupils' attitudes towards their work are at least satisfactory and occasionally good, but typically pupils are compliant and passive. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to influence their own learning.

The school council remains underdeveloped and it does not play a large enough part in making school decisions. An area of the school they would rightly like to improve is the Key Stage 2 playground which is dull. At lunchtimes some equipment is brought out and games are well organised by the adults. The pupils have no responsibility for this. Pupils' contribution to the school community is inadequate as there are few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for themselves, or each other, in or out of lessons.

Pupils' attitudes towards healthy eating are improving and pupils understand what a healthy diet should include. The good system of monitoring the lunch boxes of 'sandwich eaters' could usefully be extended to those pupils who eat a school lunch.

Attendance is continuing to improve, although linking this to trends and patterns of achievement is not secure.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning have improved and are satisfactory overall. No inadequate teaching was observed during this inspection. The weaknesses evident in Years 3, 4 and 5 at the time of the last inspection have been addressed and the quality of teaching in both the Foundation Stage and Year 6 are good.

In the well taught lessons the planning was good, the tasks were clear so pupils knew what they had to do and often involved practical activities. The pace was brisk so pupils' concentration and interest were sustained. A particular strength in all of the lessons was the consistent use of positive approaches to manage behaviour, for example using praise very effectively. In all of the lessons the teaching assistants were well deployed to support pupils' learning.

In the less well taught lessons the learning outcomes for the pupils were not always clear so pupils did not know exactly what they had to achieve. The teachers' questioning did not always challenge pupils sufficiently, especially the more able. In all lessons opportunities for the pupils to fully explain their ideas were underdeveloped. Lesson planning, which matches the work to the needs of different pupils, has improved but is inconsistent and not given sufficient priority across the school.

The school is sensibly seeking opportunities to enrich the curriculum through visitors and visits. For example, earlier in the week of the inspection the pupils had greatly enjoyed seeing a number of birds of prey brought in for display. This provided a very rich stimulus for writing and information and communication technology work.

Work is now regularly marked across the school and more guidance is being given to pupils on how to improve their work. Opportunities for writing for a range of purposes are more evident than during the last inspection. The more able pupils were able to explain clearly what they needed to do to improve their writing. There is good planning in place to continue the improvement in writing.

Improvements have been made in the accuracy of assessments and consequently in target setting. Regular assessment is used to identify changes that might be needed in provision, for example moving pupils on to intervention programmes who are not doing as well as they should. Adjusting provision to meet the needs of the more able pupils is not yet as effective.

The tracking process is good and supports the school's intervention strategies with an appropriate focus on achievement rather than attainment. However, there is insufficient tracking of particular groups of pupils, for example underachieving boys. More in depth analysis of progress made by the pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is in place and appropriate intervention strategies identified. The Foundation Stage systems for assessment and tracking of children's progress and attainment are sound but the transfer of information could be improved.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5 – satisfactory

- adopt appropriate strategies to improve writing – satisfactory
- ensure that assessment and target setting are used consistently – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The acting advisory headteacher has continued to provide good leadership. The new chair of governors works very effectively with her and together they have formed an impressive team, passionate about improvement. Relationships with parents have continued to improve and are good. The headteacher has worked with determination to secure adequate teaching in Years 3, 4 and 5. The deputy headteacher is developing his role and is having a significant influence on school improvement. The senior leadership team is working successfully and has ensured the rapid progress made in a number of areas since the last inspection. Middle leadership is beginning to improve but remains unsatisfactory. Although the teachers have received training in their subject leadership role, they have not yet had an opportunity to monitor teaching and learning consistently in their subjects across the school.

The post Ofsted action plan is satisfactory and sensibly includes three additional areas for improvement: personal development; curriculum development; and, parental involvement. A key aspect for improvement missing in all of the plans is sufficient development of the pupils as independent learners who have a greater voice in their own learning and in the running of the school as their community.

The governance of the school is good and improving rapidly. The chair of governors is providing outstanding leadership and management to the governing body, many of whom are new and are parents.

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

- develop the capacity for leadership and management across the school – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority statement of action is good and confirms its confidence in both the governing body and the acting headteacher to ensure that the school is removed from special measures by December 2007. Theoretically there is scope to close the school as there are sufficient surplus places in the surrounding area. However, the school plays an invaluable role in the local community and in a few years' time the roll is expected to rise.

The LA plan is well matched to the school's planning and uses many of the same success criteria. The link school improvement officer has given very good support to the school and has an excellent understanding of its

strengths and areas for improvement. The LA has already put in place a broad range of support for the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Quality of LA's statement of action – satisfactory.

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the range of tasks in lessons so they are more closely matched to the range of pupils' needs.
- Introduce more opportunities for the pupils to become independent learners and to make a stronger contribution to the running of the school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Susan Kara
H M Inspector