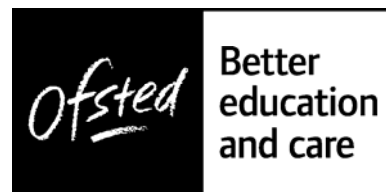


Tribal Group
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Miss C Willmott
The Headteacher
Holbrook Primary School
Holbrook Lane
Trowbridge
Wiltshire BA14 0PS

19 July 2006

Dear Miss Willmott

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HOLBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Additional Inspectors Joanna Pike and Clive Lewis to your school on 5 and 6 July 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 March 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 scrutinised documents and pupils' work. They met the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, who is also the mathematics subject leader, subject leaders for English, science and information and communication technology (ICT), the special educational needs coordinator, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA). They observed fourteen lessons or part lessons and had informal discussions with staff and pupils. Pupils were observed at lunch time and during morning break.

Context

Two teachers are leaving at the end of the summer term and arrangements have been made for their replacement. The school currently has ten classes but this is planned to reduce to eight from September 2006.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement and standards have improved in Years 1 to 6. This is as a result of a combination of better planning, better matching of work to pupils' needs, better use of assessment data to inform planning and a more effective programme of preparation for the end of key stage tests.

Children enter the school with standards which are well below average. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage and by the time they enter Year 1 standards are below average. Pupils achieve well in Years 1 and 2. By the end of Year 2 standards in reading and mathematics are approaching national levels although the number of pupils attaining expected levels in writing is still considerably below average.

Pupils are now making better progress in Key Stage 2 and standards are now in line with the national averages in English and mathematics. Significant improvements have been made in science where, as a result of improved provision for the subject, standards are now broadly in line with national averages, although fewer pupils than nationally are attaining the higher levels.

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

- increase the rate of progress in raising standards, particularly in mathematics and science for pupils in Years 1 to 6 – good.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite to visitors. They hold doors open and like chatting about their school. They take pride in their school and their own achievements. They are extremely caring towards each other as a result of the strong social and moral provision. Pupils comment that the themed assemblies are helpful in furthering this. They enjoy opportunities to take responsibility, such as helping teachers or supervisors at break or lunchtime. Year 6 pupils relish the many opportunities they have to contribute to the school, such as greeting visitors. One boy said, 'I like the choices we get to make, teachers let us decide.'

The school council gives pupils a voice and provides its members with further opportunities to contribute to the school. Pupils enjoy raising money for charities and for the school, and then deciding how the money is spent. They

know about healthy eating and how to keep safe because of the good provision made.

Behaviour is good around the school and in lessons. Pupils like the many different ways that their achievements are celebrated and rewarded. They say that sanctions are fair and firm. Pupils feel safe and know that any bullying is firmly dealt with. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning. One younger pupil commented, 'I like learning because I can count back.' Pupils like the high expectations that teachers have of how they should work and behave.

Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory overall and over half of the lessons seen were good. This improvement is as a direct result of the school's efforts and it is helping pupils to achieve as they should. There are still some inconsistencies in teaching between classes and subjects which slows the rate of progress made by some pupils.

Good teaching has common features. Teachers make clear to pupils what they are going to learn. They plan carefully so that work is well matched to pupils' needs and includes interesting tasks which engage pupils' attention. Teachers give clear explanations and use effective displays giving advice and reminders which help pupils to learn well. Pupils are willing to share their ideas because teachers create a positive atmosphere. Pupils show enthusiasm for their learning and they work well together. Teaching assistants provide good support and this ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to that made by other pupils. Questioning is used well to challenge pupils' thinking. Learning is broken into manageable steps so pupils can progress steadily.

In a good mathematics lesson, the teacher's clear instructions and advice on how to tackle the tasks set enabled pupils to make good progress working by themselves and in small groups. The pupils, working in groups of broadly similar ability, had tasks which were challenging but achievable, enabling almost all to make good progress. In a science lesson in the ICT suite, pupils made good progress because the teacher built on their prior knowledge of food chains and enabled them to work well on their own or in pairs. The teacher and the teaching assistant provided effective support for pupils of all abilities. The teacher also assessed progress during the lesson and adapted her plan to enable pupils with learning difficulties to make particularly good progress.

Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not break learning into small manageable steps or help pupils to work effectively on their own. Tasks are not well structured and pupils lose interest and become fidgety. For example, class discussions and teachers' explanations sometimes go on too long when

pupils could make better progress through more active work in groups or as individuals.

Teachers give pupils good feedback on how well they have done. They generally check pupils' understanding at the end of lessons. Teachers are also using this information well to plan the next lesson. Marking has improved and it is now undertaken more regularly and consistently, following the introduction of a whole-school marking policy. It explains what pupils have achieved and the best marking tells pupils what they need to do next.

The school has made a good start in improving its curriculum which now better meets the needs of the pupils. As a result of this change, the school has begun to address several of the weaknesses identified in the previous report. The proportion of time given to each subject is now carefully monitored. This helps to provide more continuous progress in learning across the school and ensures that all pupils have the same range and variety of experiences. Planning has improved for each subject. It now takes into account the needs of pupils of different abilities. As a result, it is beginning to provide appropriate work and support for lower attaining pupils and more challenging activities for higher attainers. These changes, however, have yet to be embedded and sustained.

Target setting has improved and is now used consistently across the school. Pupils know their targets for reading, writing and mathematics and this helps them to focus their efforts. They are able to talk about what they need to do to improve. The school's use of data for planning has improved. Test results are now analysed by teachers and discussed with the subject leader. This is beginning to give each teacher a better understanding of the progress their pupils are making, where support is needed, and where improvements or interventions need to be made.

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

- raise the quality of teaching and learning to ensure all pupils are consistently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable – good.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are broadly satisfactory. The headteacher, helped by high quality support from the LA, has focused sharply on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The school has taken speedy action to begin to tackle these problems with energy and a collective determination to succeed. This is bringing about improvement as the quality of teaching and achievement and standards are rising. The school recognises, through improvements in its own monitoring and that of the LA, that these improvements are still inconsistent and have yet to be sustained. The positive

changes already made demonstrate the school's growing capacity for further improvement.

The school's improvement plan is satisfactory. It identifies clear long term goals and appropriate general actions necessary to improve the quality of education. The school has not yet completed adequate short term planning that identifies key priorities from the improvement plan and devolves clear accountability to members of the senior leadership team. In addition, there is no clear framework to monitor the implementation of the plan in the short term.

Subject leadership is improving but it is inconsistent because subject leaders are at different stages in their development. Leaders are becoming increasingly aware of their key role in raising achievement and are much more accountable for pupils' progress and standards in their areas of responsibility. For example, lesson plans are now monitored by subject leaders each week.

Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress and the quality of the school's provision are improving. Subject leaders and the headteacher have a systematic programme of lesson observations, discussions with pupils, and monitoring the quality of pupils' work. As a result, the school has a much clearer picture of its strengths and weaknesses. However, the precise roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement plan are not clear. The governing body is supportive but is in the early stages of developing and implementing ways of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

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

- Improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures to ensure rapid improvements in the curriculum provision, teaching and learning – satisfactory.

External support

The support provided by the local authority is good. The advisory headteacher provides very effective support for the headteacher and also, together with other LA personnel, strong support for the development of subject leaders. The evaluations carried out by the LA provide the school with clear areas for improvement as well as identifying strengths. The LA statement of action is satisfactory. It clearly identifies appropriate support that is designed to match the demands made by the school's improvement plan.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Quality of local authority's statement of action – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

Priorities for further improvement

- Identify short term goals from the improvement plan with clear lines of accountability, including strategies for improving the quality of writing in Key Stage 1.
- Develop the capacity and clarify the individual roles of senior leadership team members in implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of the school improvement plan.
- Iron out the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching between different classes and subjects.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Children and Education for Wiltshire.

Yours sincerely

Tom Winskill
H M Inspector