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Mrs S Lloyd
The Headteacher
Sutton Benger C of E Aided Primary School
40 Chestnut Road
Sutton Benger
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Dear Mrs Lloyd

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SUTTON BENGER C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 November 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 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

I observed the school's work, including five lessons or part lessons, and scrutinised documents and pupils' work. I met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and has responsibility for literacy and assessment, the numeracy subject leader, groups of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2, parents, the chair and vice chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA). Informal discussions were held with staff and pupils.

Context

Two new staff joined the school in September 2006. One is the numeracy subject leader and the other is the Reception class teacher. The school is

currently recruiting for a teaching assistant. An outdoor curriculum and play area has been set aside for use by children in the Reception class. Teachers' preparation, planning and assessment time is covered by a part time teacher of French and an external provider of physical education.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Standards are above average in Key Stage 2 as shown by the 2006 national test results in English and mathematics. At the end of Key Stage 1, the picture is mixed. Reading and mathematics were above average but not enough pupils, particularly boys, gained Level 2 in writing, although the proportion gaining Level 3 was above average.

Standards of writing throughout the school are improving as a result of effective actions taken by the school. Pupils now have more opportunities for extended writing and strategies to improve other aspects of writing, including vocabulary and punctuation, are paying dividends. Many pupils enjoy writing and opportunities for writing in different styles and for different purposes are being developed across the curriculum. In the Reception class, writing is being effectively planned into a greater range of activities. Progress in writing is still inconsistent although the rate of progress is improving. There are fewer inconsistencies between classes as teachers now plan more activities together. Progress is closely monitored and improvements in writing are included in pupils' individual learning targets.

Some pupils with learning difficulties are beginning to make good progress as a result of specific actions implemented by the school to meet their needs. In lessons pupils make satisfactory progress overall. An increasing proportion is beginning to make good progress as a result of continued improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in the infants.

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

- raise standards for seven year olds by improving teaching and learning in the infants – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to their work. They are keen and enthusiastic in lessons. They enjoy school a great deal as a result of interesting and engaging learning activities and the range of enhancements such as clubs and trips offered by the school. This view is confirmed by parents. One pupil commented, 'Teachers choose things to do that are fun but we learn as well.' Pupils thoroughly enjoy the recent additions to the curriculum which enable them to benefit from specialist physical education activities and the opportunity to begin to learn French. Behaviour in class and

around the school is good. Pupils are proud that they genuinely care for one another. Members of the Reception class, for example, showed very caring attitudes towards a child who was feeling unwell. Pupils feel safe and are confident that bullying, on the rare occasions that it occurs, will be dealt with effectively. The school is successfully encouraging pupils to become more independent in their learning and able to tackle problems themselves or by working with others. For example, one infant class has worked on the theme of 'what to do when I am stuck'. Pupils have a good understanding of the need for healthy eating and exercise.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with good features, an improvement since the last monitoring inspection. This ensures that pupils make satisfactory progress and, for an increasing proportion, good progress. Planning for pupils of different abilities is well established and was clearly demonstrated in all lessons seen. The modification of plans to best meet the needs of pupils during the lesson varies in its effectiveness. In some lessons opportunities were missed for pupils who were secure in their learning to tackle more challenging activities. As a result progress remained satisfactory rather than being good. Where teachers did intervene to modify the lesson plan for different groups of pupils, progress was accelerated. In a mathematics lesson, for example, some able pupils had worked through a number of problems rapidly. The teacher checked that their understanding was secure and quickly provided them with more challenging problems.

Teachers did not keep pupils inactive on the carpet for long periods and, consequently, there was a brisk pace to all the teaching seen. Questioning was often good and encouraged pupils to develop their answers. The use of 'talk partners', where pupils clarify their ideas with a partner before offering an answer to the whole class, is becoming effective in helping pupils to develop their understanding. Better teaching often featured a good range of activities to engage pupils and help them maintain their concentration. For example, in a mathematics lesson different groups of pupils successfully tackled the same topic of ordering numbers through different activities. These included sorting numbered cards, using numbered floor tiles, writing numbers in gaps in sequences and identifying the missing numbers in parts of a number square. This good variety of activities, planned to meet the needs of different pupils, enabled pupils to make good progress in that section of the lesson. Teachers also regularly checked pupils' understanding and encouraged pupils to assess their own understanding.

Teaching assistants were well deployed and provided good support to small groups. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teaching assistant provided good support for a pupil during the teacher led session by clarifying instructions. Without direction from the teacher, she kept pupils on task when

their concentration wavered and then worked effectively with a small group of pupils outside the classroom.

The quality of marking has improved as it is more consistent across the school and in many cases it is good. It identifies where the pupils have succeeded and indicates what they should do to improve. Pupils have clear learning targets which are effectively monitored. Pupils appreciate these as they help them to focus on how to improve their work. As yet older pupils are not provided with National Curriculum levels and sub-levels and so are not always aware of the standard of work they are producing. Pupils' progress is tracked effectively and this is beginning to inform teachers' planning. Teachers are gaining confidence in assessing pupils' work and this is helping them to have realistic expectations of the level of work required by different groups of pupils.

The school now has an imaginative and well thought out curriculum plan. This identifies the skills, knowledge and understanding required in each year in all subjects. It effectively takes account of the mixed year classes, ensuring that there are no gaps or unnecessary duplication in pupils' work. It also helps teachers to plan links between different subjects and to incorporate other aspects of learning such as problem solving. For example, in a good literacy lesson pupils had drafted stories for younger children and had to select the best method of presenting these, including the use of pictures, using information and communication technology. Opportunities to improve writing are also identified in subjects other than literacy.

The curriculum in the Reception class has been greatly improved by the addition of an outdoor curriculum area which enables children to enjoy and benefit from a much wider range of activities. Positive steps are being taken to improve the transition from the Foundation Stage into Key Stage 1. For example, the Reception and Class 1 teachers are working more closely. This has resulted in the Year 1 teacher working with Reception children more frequently and also using Foundation Stage activities with some Year 1 pupils. The school has more effective systems for analysing the attainment on entry and progress of children in Reception. This is improving the planning to meet the needs of children in Reception.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good. Analysis of pupils' test data and information from teachers' monitoring records identifies pupils who need extra support for aspects of their work. Specific support activities are provided to help these pupils improve their rates of progress. The school's analysis of individual case studies shows that many pupils make good progress as a result of these interventions. As a result, the school is becoming more inclusive in its academic provision as well as providing high quality care for the pupils.

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

- help staff be more effective at checking and tracking pupils' progress so they can plan a curriculum and lessons that match the learning needs of pupils with different capabilities – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school is developing a good capacity for improvement as shown by improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and the pupils' writing. The headteacher continues to provide strong, focused leadership, characterised by a relentless drive for success. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and together they have created a powerful engine of change which has placed the school on an upward trajectory of improvement. The improvements in the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and in literacy across the school are clearly attributable to developments led by the deputy headteacher and the continued improvements in teaching. The numeracy subject leader is relatively new in post and has yet to make an impact on raising achievement. The next level of leadership, that of individual subjects, is limited. As a result, much of the monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress rests heavily on the shoulders of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The school has begun to take steps to develop the role of the subject leader.

The monitoring systems for tracking pupils' progress are now well established and used by all teachers. In addition, lesson observations by the headteacher make clear the quality of teaching and what needs to be improved. This is supported by scrutinising pupils' work to monitor standards and assess progress. The results of these monitoring activities are shared with teachers and used to improve planning.

The governing body is becoming more effective. It continues to have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Currently too few governors are involved in monitoring the work of the school. The governing body has recognised this and is taking steps to develop the role of link governors to monitor and support different aspects of the school's work. The school has begun to update its self-evaluation form as means of systematically summarising its strengths and weaknesses. This provides a good basis on which to develop longer term plans for school improvement as much of the school's self-evaluation is now good.

The school communicates effectively with parents, who are well informed of their children's achievements through school reports and discussions with teachers. Teachers are accessible informally as well as through regular planned parents' meetings and curriculum workshops. There is a good range of written communication including school and class newsletters as well as specific letters for particular issues. For example, results of the school's

performance in national tests are provided as well as summaries and evaluations of the school's improvement plans. In addition, governors provide their own written communications and offer parents the opportunity to meet members of the governing body. The school also canvasses the views of parents, pupils, governors and staff through an annual questionnaire.

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

- put in place effective management systems and procedures that clearly focus on raising achievement and enable staff and governors to acquire the skills to evaluate the impact of their development actions and spending decisions to improve teaching and learning especially in Years 1 to 4 – satisfactory
- keep parents informed of developments and take account of their views – good.

External support

The support provided by the local authority is good. The headteacher is effectively supported by the LA adviser. Provision in the Reception class is much improved as result of good support from the Early Years team of the LA working closely with the new Reception teacher. Local authority support for teaching and learning is good but much of this is increasingly provided by the school. The governing body benefits from the two additional governors provided by the LA. The school is increasingly setting its own agenda for improvements which is affirmed by the LA.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the subject leadership programme.
- Improve the modification of planning in lessons to enable more pupils to make good progress.
- Increase the range of activities planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils.

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

Yours sincerely



Tom Winskill
H M Inspector