



Mrs Susan Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Evans

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE OAKS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

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

This visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 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

Observations were made of lessons in each class. Discussions were held with the headteacher, chair of governors, midday supervisors and the school cooks. Informal discussions also took place with pupils and teaching assistants and teachers.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2006 there have been several important changes affecting the school. A permanent headteacher took up post at the beginning of term. The governing body has been strengthened, led by a new chairperson. A new teacher has been appointed to teach the Reception/Year 1 class.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory and shows inadequate progress since the February inspection. Standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 remain

well below national averages. In the national assessments for 2006 standards in writing for seven-year-olds were considerably lower than in reading and mathematics and much lower than they had been in 2005. The 2006 Key Stage 2 tests show that standards in mathematics were very low and remained at broadly the same level as 2005. Although below national averages, standards in English and science improved between 2005 and 2006. Overall, too many pupils did not achieve as well as they should.

Better progress was seen in lessons during the visit. More consistent teaching, a better curriculum and significantly improved behaviour have led to an improved climate for learning.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006.

- The school needs to raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes have improved and they want to learn. Incidents of poor behaviour are now rare. There are no longer detentions at lunchtime. Pupils have a role in the life and work of the school, including their involvement in the school council. A new rewards system is having a significant impact on improving pupils' behaviour. In several lessons behaviour was exemplary. Playtimes are much improved, with more for pupils to do. About three out of four pupils enjoy a healthy school meal, while some benefit from the breakfast and after-school clubs. Despite generally good progress on attendance the overall figure remains below the national average because there are more authorised absences now than last year.

Quality of provision

During the visit six lessons were observed. No inadequate teaching was seen. Lessons shared some good features including classroom management by teachers, reinforcement of basic skills and work that motivated pupils, sometimes by the use of laptop computers. The work on display in classrooms is often of outstanding quality. Teachers' planning is more effective because objectives for learning are clear. Pupils are encouraged to work together on tasks that are now better matched to their abilities. Teachers are becoming more confident in their use of assessment procedures. More effective use is being made of data on pupils' attainment. Information is now used to track the progress made by all pupils and to set more challenging targets but it is not used regularly enough.

There are aspects of teaching and learning that are less successful. The school's marking policy is not being followed consistently by every teacher. Not all teachers are deploying their assistants as effectively as they might. Some pupils do not understand what is required of them and this slows their learning. In some classes the new resources are not used well.

Since the last visit the curriculum has been revised in order to better meet the needs of its pupils. This has resulted in an increased focus on literacy and numeracy, as well as science, and provision for information and communication technology has improved, even though plans are not yet fully operational. In English, handwriting has been a focus, as well as pupils' ability to use paragraphing. In mathematics a lot of attention is given to number work, sometimes at the expense of other aspects of the subject.

Other subjects are now taught in topics and linked together. Topics include personal, social and health education and religious education, as well as a range of visits and visitors that enrich the curriculum. The quality of the accommodation has improved and the playground markings provide interesting things for pupils to do during their breaks. The high quality displays around the school celebrate pupils' work and achievements well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported effectively, with more flexible use of teaching assistants. However, not enough pupils from the 'behaviour class' join their peers in lessons.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006.

- The quality of teaching needs to be consistently good enough to enable the children in Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach much higher standards and to achieve as well as they should – satisfactory.
- Improvements to the curriculum are required so that it provides children with more enrichment and meets their needs more specifically – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher is providing strong leadership. She is very well supported by her deputy, the chair of governors and officers from the local authority (LA). Their focus is leading to improvements in teaching and learning, the curriculum and, especially, in the monitoring and evaluation of provision.

The school's improved monitoring of pupils' progress is giving teachers a more realistic view about the effectiveness of their work. Subject leaders are more accountable to senior managers. More effective action is being taken when pupils are not meeting their targets. Evaluation is improving. However, given the poor achievement of most pupils, the tracking of their progress is still insufficient, especially in mathematics.

The work of the governing body is improving. Governors have a good sense of direction and are fully supportive of the steps being taken. School leaders are accurate in their evaluation of the progress they are making. They are clear about what still needs to be done and about how to do it. Staff are positive about the way forward.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006.

- The school needs to continue to improve and implement the management systems that have recently been introduced, so that performance is better monitored and evaluated in order that many areas or provision are improved. The appointment of a permanent headteacher is key to this improvement – good.

External Support

The LA effectively monitors the performance of the school against the identified key issues. The school has been well supported through regular visits from the link adviser and consultants. Steps taken in support of the school's improvement are well documented.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to prior approval.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the regularity of checking on pupils' progress, especially in mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Henry Moreton
Additional Inspector