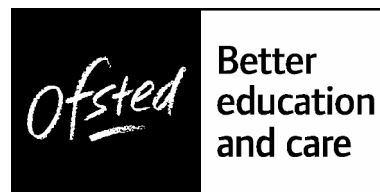


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1 December 2006

Miss D Cotter
The Headteacher
Badock's Wood Primary School
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Dear Miss Cotter

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BADOCK'S WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Peter Kemble and Rodney Braithwaite, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 14 and 15 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 October 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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher and senior staff, the chair and vice chair of governors, the school's link inspector, and a consultant from the Intensifying Support Programme.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, the permanent headteacher has taken up post. There have been many changes of teaching staff and over half of the teaching complement is new to the school. Two are newly qualified teachers. The chair and vice chair of governors are both newly elected.

Achievement and standards

The results of national tests and teacher assessments have become available since the last monitoring inspection. As the school predicted, results for the Year 6 pupils improved substantially on 2005, reversing the decline of the three previous years. This cohort of pupils did not do well in the national tests when they were seven years of age, so the progress that they made over the junior years was at least satisfactory. Efforts that were made to boost their attainment in Year 6 were successful. The school also correctly predicted that the pupils in Year 2 would not do as well as in previous years. Results were exceptionally low in writing, and low in reading and mathematics, continuing a downward trend. This group of pupils was adversely affected by several changes of teacher in the past year. The school is well aware that the cohort has a lot of ground to make up. Targets for the current Year 6 are challenging, given underachievement in the past, but are an accurate reflection of what the pupils should be capable of, given what they attained when they were seven.

Observations in lessons and the school's assessment information confirm that more pupils are making satisfactory progress and that some are making good progress. More are on track to reach the levels that are expected for their age. This is because improvements to assessment mean that teachers have a better understanding of the levels pupils are working at and so pitch work more accurately. In addition, the teachers' expectations of what the pupils should attain are rising because the setting of targets has made clear what they are aiming for. The impact of initiatives to raise standards is beginning to be seen. Underachievement is still widespread and achievement and standards are inadequate overall, but pupils are beginning to close the gap.

Considerable effort has gone in to raising standards in English. The 'big write', introduced this term, is having a positive effect on the pupils' attitudes to writing which, together with better teaching of basic skills, is leading to faster progress. Scrutiny of samples of work shows that pupils have begun to take more care in spelling, handwriting and the presentation of their work, where poor work habits have long been ingrained. However, there are still many weaknesses in the pupils' basic skills in English, for example many of the youngest pupils find listening very difficult.

Personal development and well-being

The school reports that there have been further improvements to the pupils' behaviour since the beginning of the year. A new policy for the management of behaviour has been established which clarifies what is expected of pupils. There are still some inconsistencies and not all teachers are swift to remind pupils of what is expected, for example, when they move around the school. During this inspection, the pupils' behaviour was generally satisfactory and there were times when the pupils behaved well, such as during assembly. On

the other hand, occasions when the pupils displayed real enthusiasm and enjoyment were few. In lessons, the teachers and assistants had to work hard to keep the pupils' attention and to make sure they were appropriately focused on their tasks.

There are still some pupils who present particularly challenging behaviour and the number of fixed term exclusions was high during the first two months of this academic year. The school is implementing a number of initiatives such as a 'learning zone', where pupils, with the support of a learning mentor, will be helped to manage their behaviour themselves and continue with their learning. The school also intends that parents should be more closely involved in ensuring that their children behave well at school. The school council and peer mediation schemes are to be re-established. These initiatives, together with better teaching, have the potential to bring further improvements in behaviour and to go some way towards changing the pupils' attitudes to school and to learning.

Tackling the low attendance rate remains a major task. Despite encouraging signs at the last monitoring inspection, attendance remains stubbornly below 91%, where it has been for the past four years. The school's analysis shows that the attendance of 83 pupils was below 90%; this is just over a quarter of the roll. The school's new action plan includes many appropriate actions and shows how responsibility for following up individual cases is shared between the Education Welfare Service, the deputy headteacher and the learning mentor. There has been some success with individual families and increased attendance is celebrated, but there is a long way to go to change deep rooted attitudes to the importance of schooling in the local community. The school's procedures are rigorous but have not yet made a difference.

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

- improve pupils' attendance at school – inadequate.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning remains satisfactory overall. However, more than half of the teachers observed on this visit were not in post at the time of the last inspection. Some aspects of teaching are showing improvement. For example, most teachers are using assessment information more effectively to match work to pupils' different starting points and capabilities, although some are more skilled than others in doing this. Levels of challenge are generally better as a result. Lesson plans include more opportunities to promote pupils' speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. Teachers share the purpose of lessons with pupils more effectively than before. However, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Some good lessons were seen and one was inadequate, but the majority of lessons were satisfactory.

Good lessons reflected the improvements that have been made. For instance, pupils in a mixed Year 5 and Year 6 class achieved well during an English lesson because the teacher involved them regularly in discussion, interspersed the lesson with short, snappy activities, and continually challenged them with verbal and written tasks. As a result, pupils concentrated well and their interest was sustained. Lessons that were no better than satisfactory were not sufficiently motivating. Many pupils have short concentration spans and are easily distracted and, when lessons did not engage them, they lost interest quickly and became restless. Similarly, where tasks were either too hard or too easy, the pupils made little or no progress and, in some instances, misbehaved.

The headteacher meets individual class teachers regularly to discuss pupils' progress. These discussions are helping teachers think about the reasons why pupils are not making sufficient progress and how best to support them. Consequently, there is evidence in teachers' planning that activities are more closely matched to pupils' identified needs.

Pupils' workbooks show that marking has improved and pupils are given useful feedback. However, practice still varies from class to class. As noted at the last monitoring inspection, there are still instances where teachers' written comments, including those on whiteboards and labels, do not provide pupils with good examples of handwriting, punctuation and spelling.

Satisfactory progress has been made in modifying the curriculum to meet the pupils' needs more effectively. Teams of teachers are looking closely at the quality and range of learning activities and how best to provide stimulating enjoyable activities. The standard of pupils' writing is showing improvement following adjustments to the curriculum to give pupils more good quality writing experiences. A strong emphasis on teaching English and mathematics each morning is also helping to raise standards. However, teachers vary in their ability to plan variety and interest into these long sessions.

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

- raise pupils' standards and achievement, especially in English and mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The recently appointed headteacher has already had a very positive impact on the school. She is establishing a clear direction, tightly focused on key areas which require improvement, and is building the capacity of the staff to manage and be accountable for their areas of responsibility. The headteacher's evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is spot on,

pulling no punches, and giving a clear and honest account of what has been achieved and what needs to be done. One teacher reported that although there was a lot to do it was being done enthusiastically because the purpose was clear. Morale is improving, staff absence is falling, and staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and what is expected of them.

New management structures and strategies have been established and teachers have accepted their newly defined roles with enthusiasm. Responsibility is being devolved to smaller management teams and communication is better. The senior management team now has a much greater input into school improvement. This includes a strong emphasis on monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in order to help teachers improve their practice. Guided by the headteacher, all teachers have contributed to, and agreed, the monitoring criteria and several senior staff are now involved in rigorous examination of pupils' work and observation of classroom practice. These shared 'building blocks' have put the school in a more favourable position to improve standards and achievement.

Significant changes are having to be achieved within a very tight budget. At present, the deputy headteacher has an almost full time teaching role because there is insufficient funding to enable him to be released often enough to work with the headteacher on important initiatives. This means that the headteacher is not able to devolve responsibilities as quickly as she would wish and has to carry a large burden herself.

The governing body, which has seen a number of recent changes, including the appointment of a new chair and vice chair, has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and is offering appropriate challenge to senior managers. This is an improvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005

- develop the school's capacity to improve by raising the quality of leadership and management at all levels – good.

External support

The school has continued to receive a high degree of support from local authority consultants, advanced skills teachers, and the Education Welfare Service. Support for improvements in English has been well received and is having a positive impact. Members of staff are beginning to take responsibility in some areas, for example in the use of assessment information, but there is still quite a heavy reliance on expertise from outside. The local authority intends that its support should diminish in line with the school's improvement. The headteacher sensibly ensures that all input to the school fits squarely within the school's priorities.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 the City of Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
H M Inspector