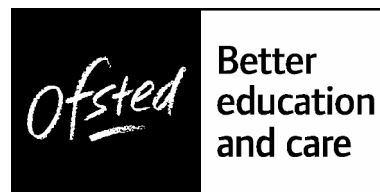


Tribal Group
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



3 November 2006

Mr Robin Kneebone
The Headteacher
Cape Cornwall School
St Just
Penzance
Cornwall
TR19 7JX

Dear Mr Kneebone

SCHOOLS WHERE THE PUPILS' BEHAVIOUR HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A CONCERN BY INSPECTION: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CAPE CORNWALL SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Charlotte Evers and Robert Allan, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 17 and 18 October 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was a return monitoring inspection as part of the programme of visits to schools where the students' behaviour has been identified as a concern by inspection.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of receipt of this letter.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with senior leaders, other nominated staff, groups of students, the chair of governors, and representatives from the local authority and police service.

Context

There have been three new teaching appointments since the last monitoring visit in March 2006. Since then, the school has been intensively involved with the local authority's 'Education Excellence' pilot. This programme sets out explicit guidelines on teaching, code of conduct and behaviour management.

Achievement and standards

The 2006 test results at the end of Year 9 and the examination results at the end of Year 11 broadly matched the school's targets based on students' prior attainment. Students achieved very well in mathematics at the end of Year 9 and satisfactorily in Year 11. In both Year 9 and Year 11, students' achievement in English was satisfactory but fewer than expected reached the higher levels in Year 9. The standards seen in lessons reflected the wide range of students' capabilities appropriately. In the well taught lessons, students made good progress and achieved well.

Personal development and well-being

Standards of behaviour have improved. Students say that the new code of conduct has made a difference to behaviour. Where teachers followed the guidelines for reinforcing the code of conduct, behaviour was at least satisfactory and often good. A very few teachers do not use the guidelines effectively or consistently.

The students enjoyed well taught lessons, appreciating lively presentations and interesting assignments. In these lessons, students behaved very well and, at times, attitudes to learning were exemplary. In the few instances where the teaching was dull or work was too difficult or too easy, students became restless. At breaks between lessons and in the dining room at lunch time, students generally behaved sensibly and safely, guided by effective staff supervision.

The conduct guidelines have led to more prudent use of the isolation room. There is a substantial drop in the number of students sent to the isolation room because they are disturbing lessons. At the same time, fixed term exclusions have dropped massively.

The school has effective means by which students can report bullying and get support. Many students say that they would use them if they had concerns and that problems are usually dealt with effectively. Students feel that there is someone, whether in school or from a wide range of outside agencies, to whom they can go to discuss problems.

Students clearly recognise that the school values their views. They make a considerable and valuable contribution to the school community. Rightly, they participated in drawing up the conduct code and launching it with other students. As a result, they respect the guidelines which they believe set firm and fair expectations of how they should behave.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified in the inspection in January 2005:

- reduce the amount of unacceptable behaviour – good
- deal more effectively with unreported bullying – good
- improve opportunities for the students' voice to be heard – good.

Quality of provision

Good progress has been made in improving teaching and the school has a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Clear guidance, reinforced by good management, has proved useful in improving the structure of lessons. More attention now needs to be given to the improvement of learning, including students' understanding of how improvement can be made.

In good lessons, teaching captured students' interest and provided them all with a level of challenge that stimulated them to work to the limits of their capabilities. As a result, teachers seldom had recourse to the behaviour management system. In the best lessons, teachers explained clearly what level students were working at and what they needed to do to reach higher levels. Consequently, students worked diligently, learned effectively, and enjoyed their justifiable sense of achievement.

A few lessons were dull and offered little to engage students. Ineffective use of the school's systems for managing behaviour hampered students' progress further.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2005:

- address weaknesses in teaching, through raising expectations of students' behaviour – good.

Leadership and management

The 'Education Excellence' programme has successfully brought together strategies for improving teaching and behaviour management into a well documented and systematic approach. The senior team has coordinated this challenging programme very well. Staff development activities have homed in on developing skills relevant to its expectations.

These strategies have ensured that everyone knows what they are expected to do. The staff are now very clear about the structure of lessons and their responsibilities in managing behaviour. Staff and students are very clear

about the conduct that the school expects and what will happen if students do not comply. The data compiled from questionnaires seeking the perceptions of staff, students and parents show that the new strategies are having an impact and generally staff believe that the systems are effective.

The September survey of staff, however, revealed that a few individuals felt that the programme had caused stress and undermined their confidence. The senior team has not ducked difficult messages but has tried to balance the prime needs of the school currently with a range of professional development activities. Balancing expectations of conformity, whilst encouraging professional flexibility, is now a key discussion point for senior managers.

The school's monitoring of the quality of teaching is good. These observations have provided leaders and managers with an accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses in teaching as well as an appropriate agenda for further training. The senior team has a much more secure overview of practice within the school. Sensible steps, including peer coaching, are taken to secure improvements.

The system by which data on pupils' targets is provided for teachers has been revised and is to be the subject of training in the near future. Currently, most pupils have only the most general idea of the grade or level towards which they are working and few have sufficient awareness of what they need to do to reach those standards.

A second key discussion point for senior managers now is whether strategies are promoting good achievement in lessons for all students. In this small school, classes often have wide variations in prior attainment. Although the current monitoring programme gives useful insights into key features of teaching, it is not sufficiently focused on whether students, whatever their starting points, are achieving as well as they should.

The school has worked very effectively with a range of external services and is managing challenging behaviours effectively and creatively. The team working with the police and youth service is really impressive as both are fully aware of the school's approach to managing behaviour and reinforce this in their own dealings with the young people. The youth service and the police work in the school regularly with individual students who have the most challenging behaviours. Several productive strategies are underway to raise the aspirations of these young people and to show them the consequences of socially unacceptable behaviour.

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

- coordinate the various initiatives that are taking place to improve teaching, learning and classroom management – good
- clarify the school's approach to managing behaviour (strategies, systems and responsibilities) – good
- monitor the implementation of this approach and develop a secure overview of practice – good
- evaluate the impact of the school's management of behaviour rigorously to establish whether the school has the capacity to meet the wide range of pupils' needs effectively and efficiently over time – good.

External support

A range of external services are working closely, and very productively, with the school. The local authority has given intensive support to the school through its 'Education Excellence' project. This programme, rightly, covers a wide range of important classroom management skills and whole-school systems for reinforcing a well publicised code of conduct.

The programme has provided a strong direction and pace to improvement planning and this has helped the staff, with hard work, to achieve much in a relatively short period. Systems for managing behaviour are more efficient and increasingly effective. There is much more consistency in classrooms than six months ago. Wisely, the programme gathers the views of staff, students and parents as well as evidence about the standards of behaviour and the quality of teaching.

Main Judgements

The school has made good progress towards improving the students' behaviour.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all teachers implement the guidance for managing behaviour consistently.
- Focus more on the progress that students should make in lessons given their starting points and strategies to establish whether they do make this progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Brenda Cusdin
H M Inspector