

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

Mrs Margot Brown
The Headteacher
Abbey C of E Infant School
Aston Road
Nuneaton
Warwickshire
CV11 5EL

31 October 2006

Dear Mrs Brown

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ABBEY C OF E INFANT SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Barbara Crane, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 October 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 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, groups of pupils, parents, the chair of governors and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the first visit a new headteacher has been appointed who took up her post in September. In addition, an assistant headteacher has been appointed from within the existing staff. At the time of the visit there were two supply teachers working in the nursery due to a long term absence.

Achievement and standards

As at the time of the last visit children make satisfactory progress through the Foundation Stage. Assessments conducted in July indicate that at the end of the Reception year approximately two thirds of the children had reached the goals set for their age in all areas except for writing. Better progress was made in mathematical development, where three quarters of the children attained the expected goals.

Standards continue to be below average by the end of Year 2 and achievement through Years 1 and 2 is inadequate. In the national tests for seven-year-olds last July, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected levels was significantly below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. In writing, no pupils achieved levels above those expected for their age.

This term, the analysis of assessment data has started to help teachers understand where the pockets of underachievement are located. Support is being better targeted but it is still at an early stage. It is improving the individual progress of some pupils. Consequently, in the present Year 2 standards are slightly better than last year with a small number working at levels above those expected for their age. For instance, the story writing by some pupils shows some good use of descriptive vocabulary. If this rate of progress continues, the targets set for next year's national tests can be achieved and this would be a substantial improvement on the previous two years.

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

- raise standards of reading and writing in Years 1 and 2 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development and well-being continue to be satisfactory. Behaviour is good and pupils enjoy being together. They are proud when they gain awards for making an extra effort, being particularly thoughtful towards others or doing well in their work. Pupils are pleased that their parents can join in the assemblies that celebrate these successes. The school's initiative to improve pupils' attendance has been rewarded by an upward trend and attendance is at a broadly average level so far this school year. Pupils know what they are aiming for in terms of growing as sensible and caring individuals but their view of what they are aiming for in their work is less clear.

Quality of provision

Teaching in individual lessons is satisfactory overall. However, there is still not enough good teaching and this is what is needed if pupils are to catch up on

the ground they have lost. In addition, there are too few examples of really strong teaching that would provide the role models that are needed for other teachers to follow.

The general methods and organisation of lessons are starting to show improvement. Planning, at its best in the Nursery, indicates both what is to be learnt and how it will provide challenge for different levels of capability. However, these plans are not always interpreted in the right way. Consequently, some pupils find the work easy whilst others find it too hard. For instance, in one set of books some pupils had only written the date because they had not understood what they had to do.

Teachers have started to develop better tracking of progress. Pupils now have their own target sheets and in discussion they are able to explain what these are. This is much improved from the last visit but is still not helping teachers move pupils' learning on from one series of lessons to the next. This is partly because there are gaps in assessment information which have made it difficult to track improvement over time. More importantly though teachers are not expecting high enough standards. In essence, teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are still too low.

The curriculum is now starting to concentrate on developing basic key skills and planning is showing some relevant links to other subjects. This was evident in the planning for science. However, it is not yet vibrant enough and teachers are not using a good range of resources to support the basic skills in subjects such as English. As a result, pupils are not able to use a full range of different learning styles that will help their enquiry skills and bring about more enjoyment in their lessons.

Pupils are well looked after on a day to day basis. They freely share any concerns with adults. The school has not yet established reliable and accurate ways of measuring pupils' progress. Some data is missing or is inaccurate. As a result, there is often no firm starting point from which teachers can set out the next steps in learning for pupils.

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

- improve the quality of assessment and hence teachers' understanding of what children need to do to make progress – inadequate.

Progress on the extra areas for improvement identified by the last visit:

- build upon the better tracking systems to make sure that pupils understand the purpose of the lesson and whether they have reached or exceeded their targets – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher has made a good start in gaining a clear understanding of what needs to improve

so that pupils can make more consistent progress. In the few weeks that she has been at the school, she has made checks on what is happening in classrooms as well as looking closely at data to see which groups of pupils should be doing better. The newly appointed assistant headteacher has provided effective support in this work. The evaluation of pupils' progress has revealed that there are still weaknesses in some of the school's systems to help teachers in setting targets for pupils. Planning for improvement, presently in draft form, sets out reasonable lines of action. This is drawn from an objective view of the current position, focuses on the right things to raise standards and improve teaching, and thus means that the school is well placed to improve further.

Governors have undertaken a wide range of training to better equip them to carry out their roles and responsibilities. They have used what they have learned to set up a well considered programme of visits to check on how well the school is doing. They are now in a better position to ask the right questions of the school.

Good progress has been made in improving communication with parents and regaining their confidence in the school's work. Parents have responded very positively, for example, to improved information and the changes made to the way in which the school helps Reception children to settle in as they start in the Nursery or Reception classes.

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

- improve leadership and management by training governors and appointing staff at senior levels – satisfactory
- improve the quality of communication with parents to raise their confidence in what the school provides – good.

Progress on the extra areas for improvement identified by the last visit:

- accelerate the development of the governing body – good.

External support

Good support has continued to be provided by the local authority. This has included a range of specialists to support work in both literacy and numeracy. Now that the majority of lessons are satisfactory, the LA's next priority is appropriately to raise the percentage of good teaching.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not yet be appointed until the senior management team has become fully established.

Priorities for further improvement

- Establish an accurate measure of how well pupils are doing, then set targets that aim high for all groups of pupils, then make sure work is adapted so that pupils reach their targets.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for Warwickshire and the Chief Education Officer for the Diocese of Coventry.

Yours sincerely

David Collard
Additional Inspector