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Mrs B Herszenhorn
The Headteacher
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29 September 2006

Dear Mrs Herszenhorn

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CHADSMOOR CE (VC) JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Pat Lowe, Additional Inspector, to your school on 19 and 20 September, 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 December 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, the school council, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in May 2006 one teacher has left and three teachers have been appointed. The increase in the total number of teachers employed by the school has enabled it to reduce class sizes in Years 5 and 6.

Achievement and standards

Children's results in the 2006 national tests are similar to those of 2005 and remain below average. A recently introduced tracking system enables the school to monitor effectively the progress children make from year to year. Tracking is rigorous and enables the school to precisely identify underachieving children. Around one third of children are underachieving in English and around one half are underachieving in mathematics. Consequently children's progress until recently has been inadequate. However, improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in all year groups mean that progress is now better. During lessons observed by inspectors the progress made by children was at least satisfactory and in the majority of lessons it was good. It is too soon for the better progress seen to have impacted on standards of work in lessons which continue to be below average. Older children will need to make consistently good progress over the year if they are to catch up and achieve the levels expected of them in the 2007 national tests.

The school uses its tracking system to set targets for individual children and to set the whole school performance targets. Targets are challenging and realistic. Expectations of children have been successfully raised. However, the school recognises that tracking needs further refinement to enable it to check regularly that children are making sufficient progress. At present the school and the governors cannot be assured that children who have underachieved in the past are now catching up.

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

- raise expectations across the school by giving more weight to the results of Key Stage 1 tests – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Children enjoy school, as shown by their good attendance and punctuality. Good attitudes, behaviour and relationships contribute to children's well-being. Children show an interest in school life and respond positively when their views are sought. They feel safe in school and say that bullying is not a problem. The school provides a good range of sporting activities in which many children take part. These, together with the school's healthy eating initiatives, help to improve children's levels of fitness and well-being. Children are beginning to make informed choices about what they eat and how they exercise. They contribute to school development through membership of the school council. The school has strong links with the community. Children develop enterprise and citizenship skills through their support of local and national charities, participation in local events, and sponsorship of a child in Brazil. Concern for children's personal and social education permeates all aspects of the work of the school.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning observed was good. It was good in six lessons and satisfactory in four lessons. Where teaching was good, high expectations, a rigorous pace and challenging activities led to effective learning. Where teaching was satisfactory, work was not well matched to children's prior attainment, ability and needs and children were not sufficiently challenged. Teachers' planning in English, mathematics and science has improved and is now good. Planning for other subjects is now satisfactory.

Assessment procedures have improved. All teachers are now using assessment information to set work that is more suited to children's abilities and needs. Children are encouraged to explain what they are doing in each lesson and assess how well they have achieved. Marking has improved and helps children to know how to improve their work.

Teachers demonstrate subject knowledge that is at least satisfactory and, more often, good. Teaching assistants give good support to children who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

The curriculum gives priority to English, mathematics and science. Teachers are beginning to more actively promote the use of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. There is a good range of after school clubs, visits to places of interest, themed events, and day and residential visits. Visitors to the school contribute to children's enjoyment and achievement. Information and communication technology is generally taught well and is used to support learning in other subjects. The learning environment is enhanced by attractive displays of children's work.

Good pastoral care and support contributes to children's sense of well-being and enjoyment of learning. Careful attention is paid to health and safety issues and child protection. Risk assessments are fully in place and the school site is secure. Sensitive induction and transfer procedures ensure that children settle happily into new routines. The school has good links with parents and a range of local agencies that safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable children, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements.

The impact of care, advice and guidance on children's academic progress is less effective. Improved target setting and tracking procedures are now in place. However, there has been a lack of urgency in taking remedial action to address the underachievement of individual children. The majority of children do not know what National Curriculum level they are working at and do not have the opportunity to monitor their progress within that level. They have no knowledge of the requirements of the next level or how they can work towards it. Most parents are not aware of the role they could play in helping their children to achieve their full potential.

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

- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring activities are better matched to the pupils' level of understanding – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Strong and effective leadership, together with good training provided by the LA, has brought about a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Decisive action has been taken to reduce class sizes in Years 5 and 6. Good progress has been made on improving the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. However, although there have been clear improvements in the education provided by the school, the school has failed to act with sufficient urgency in providing extra support for underachieving children. Having identified with precision which children are underachieving, the school is still considering how it will help this substantial group catch up. This was identified as a priority at the last monitoring visit and requires immediate action.

The governors have set up a strategy group to monitor the progress of the school. Consequently they are better informed but are not fully aware of the magnitude of improvement required in standards to bring children's achievement up to the expected levels. The governors are not holding the school to account with sufficient rigour.

Although satisfactory progress has been made by the school on most of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection, the lack of a strategy to support underachieving children is a serious oversight. Progress on improving monitoring and evaluation has been satisfactory but the pursuit of improvement has been inadequate.

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

- improve the quality of leadership and management by making monitoring and evaluation more rigorous in identifying weaknesses and pursuing improvement – inadequate.

External support

The support provided by the local authority to the school continues to be good. It includes the provision of advisers, training and a consultant headteacher. Having effectively supported the school in improving the quality of teaching and self-evaluation, future support will focus on the priorities identified below.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– satisfactory

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

Raise standards by:

- taking immediate and effective action to provide extra support for children identified as underachieving
- ensuring children know their National Curriculum levels and what they need to do to improve.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for the Diocese of Lichfield and the Director of Children's Services and Life Long Learning for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

David Anstead
H M Inspector