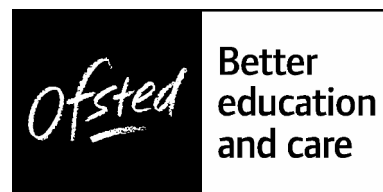


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Ms R Kelly
The Headteacher
Nonsuch Primary School
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10 November 2006

Dear Ms Kelly

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF NONSUCH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Pat Walsh HMI and Gavin Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 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 July 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 you, the deputy headteacher, phase leaders, subject leaders for English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), the chair of governors, the school council, and a representative from the local authority (LA). Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and pupils. Using this evidence, I made the following observations to you, the deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and a representative from the LA.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit there have been some significant staff changes. The newly appointed assistant headteacher was absent for half of the summer term following a sudden bereavement. She had a phased return and is completing her induction this term. Three teachers left in July, the supply teacher who covered teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time, the temporary teacher covering a maternity leave, and the special educational needs consultant.

The new headteacher took up her post in September 2006. She has forged a strong partnership with the deputy headteacher. The deputy headteacher is job sharing (0.4) in Year 5 with a teacher who has returned part time from maternity leave (0.6). As there is one less class this year, there is an additional teacher who is job sharing (0.4) in Year 3 and covering PPA time (0.6) in Years 3 to 6. A teacher was involved in a serious accident over the summer which resulted in her absence at the start of term. She had a phased return to school in October.

Achievement and standards

In 2006, pupils in Year 6 exceeded both the original and revised end of year targets in English and mathematics. Although the unvalidated national test results show a significant improvement in English, mathematics and science, standards of attainment remain below average overall and achievement is still inadequate. Pupils' performance in mathematics is especially weak. Furthermore, 2006 results in Year 2 reveal that standards here continue to be well below average.

Children make satisfactory progress from a low baseline in the Foundation Stage but there is still significant underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics throughout Years 1 to 6. The school's tracking data and pupils' work clearly show that too many of pupils are not achieving as much as they could. Standards of handwriting are exceptionally low and the work that many pupils produce is still poorly presented. The gap between what pupils are attaining and what they are capable of is not closing quickly enough and this is most marked in Years 2 and 3.

The new headteacher is determined to raise standards and is working closely with the deputy headteacher to address the gaps in the pupils' prior learning. Their strong partnership is clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. There is clear accountability for progress and this is helping to raise teachers' expectations of their pupils, especially the achievement of boys. Tracking data is providing useful information about individual pupils' progress as they move through the school. As a result, teachers are much better equipped to take swift action to address underachievement. They are using the tracking data to plan lessons more effectively to meet the needs of pupils. However, the impact of this is not yet

evident in pupils' work. Individual targets are set in English and mathematics but not all pupils are aware of them or what they need to do to achieve them.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, has improved and is now good. Children in the Foundation Stage behave well and have good attitudes to school. They are confident and respond well to opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively.

Behaviour across the school is good. Work on pupils' self esteem is developing positive attitudes to learning and supporting their satisfactory spiritual development. Moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils know right from wrong. As a result, behaviour is good in most classes and is having a beneficial effect on learning. Around the school behaviour is good and pupils say there is little or no bullying and that they feel safe and secure. Pupils are confident to turn to adults should the need arise. Pupils from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds work and play well together.

The school council gives pupils a voice and helps them contribute to their community. Pupils have a sound understanding of the importance of safety, exercise and healthy eating. Although attendance is still just below the national average, the school makes every effort to improve the situation through letters, rewards and assemblies. Inspectors observed a 'Cool Cats' assembly which rewarded pupils for their good attendance, whilst an 'Inspire Workshop' for parents gave clear advice on the importance of regular attendance. The school is having considerable success with improving punctuality and reducing the number of holidays taken in term time.

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

- raise standards and improve behaviour by seeking ways to combat unsatisfactory punctuality and increase pupils' attendance rate – good.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate overall. Although around half of the lessons seen were good, inadequate teaching was observed in a quarter of the lessons. In the good lessons planning is a key feature, giving learning a good structure. Improvements in classroom behaviour, through teachers' effective management strategies, have had a positive effect on the progress pupils make in most classes. However, in the inadequate lessons, behaviour is not managed well, routines are disrupted, and the pace of learning is adversely affected.

Overall, the standard of teaching needs to be improved to replicate that seen in the best lessons. Higher attaining pupils can still be challenged further and

boys motivated to become fully engaged in their learning. The presentation of work in books is still not good enough. In addition, handwriting needs to be taught more effectively throughout the school so that pupils develop a clear joined script.

Teaching assistants provide good support for teachers and pupils. Their support is especially helpful to pupils with learning difficulties, who make good progress towards their own learning targets. Equally important is the support the learning mentor provides, both in and out of lessons, enabling many pupils to take advantage of the teaching available to them and to make better progress in their learning.

Pupils experience a broad, satisfactory curriculum, enriched by a growing range of visits, visitors and after school activities. Provision in ICT has improved and pupils are given good access to the computer suite. Whilst their skills have improved, insufficient time is spent using ICT in other subjects across the curriculum. Cross-curricular work has improved and pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are beginning to be used to support other subjects. This will give pupils increased opportunities to utilise these basic skills. The move towards having lessons which support pupils' social and emotional development is good, although this innovation is still too new to have had a significant impact.

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

- raise standards and improve behaviour by improving the quality of teaching and learning opportunities – inadequate
- raise standards and improve behaviour by ensuring that all pupils' needs are met effectively – satisfactory
- raise standards and improve behaviour by ensuring that English, mathematics and ICT are taught through, and used in, other subjects – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The new headteacher demonstrates a clear determination to improve weak teaching and drive up standards. Since September, she has observed all of the teachers and provided them with written feedback. Her appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching is accurate and this was confirmed by a joint observation with HMI. She is passionate about ensuring that every child achieves the best they can and is aware there is much to be done to tackle the long tail of underachievement. In order to bring about the significant improvement required, she has built effectively on the work started by the previous acting headteachers and identified further important issues to tackle. In partnership with the deputy headteacher and chair of governors, she has devised a clear and strategic plan of action to address these issues as swiftly as possible. The detailed action plan would benefit from quantifiable milestones to ensure regular and measurable evaluation of progress.

Restructuring of the leadership team has not yet been addressed. This is a matter of priority in order to clearly define and formalise roles and responsibilities and drive forward the necessary improvements. The subject leaders continue to monitor and evaluate the quality of pupils' learning. They have monitored planning and assessment folders and completed book trawls. However, there are still too few opportunities for lesson observations or for the sharing of good practice.

The coordination of English, mathematics and ICT is now more effective. Increasingly, exciting opportunities are planned for cross-curricular links in the curriculum. The subject leaders recognise that more needs to be done to develop the use of basic skills across the curriculum. In relation to pupils' weaker performance in mathematics, the school improvement plan has a clear focus on raising standards in numeracy during the autumn term. The senior management team knows what needs to be done but it is not sufficiently clear about how to secure the necessary improvements.

Governors are committed to the work of the school. Recently, a grant obtained by the governing body was 'matched funded' by the LA to provide new security fencing and improve the play area. Although governors are all linked to a subject area and each has a class to support, few make regular visits to the school. As a consequence, governors are not yet able to hold the school sufficiently to account. In addition, plans for governor training have not yet been followed through and there are two LA governor positions unfilled.

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

- raise standards and improve behaviour by ensuring that school leaders devise a clear plan of action that focuses on how to improve provision and raise standards – satisfactory.

External support

The school has been supported well by the LA. The new headteacher is currently benefiting from a good induction programme. This follows the successful handover from the previous two acting headteachers. This term the school is benefiting from the weekly support of an advanced skills teacher. However, the LA could usefully review their recent support, especially the impact of the Primary Evaluative Review (PER) on the staff team and the effectiveness of the support provided by the numeracy consultant.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory progress.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory progress.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement:

- Eradicate all inadequate teaching and increase the proportion of good teaching.
- Improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching by making the best use of the expertise which already exists in the school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Strategic Director of Learning and Culture in Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Linda Rockey
H M Inspector