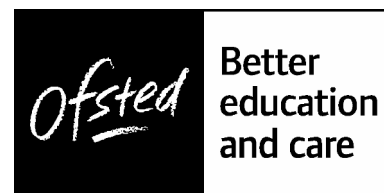


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15 December 2006

Mr Mark Whyman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Whyman

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I visited your school on 21 November 2006, for the time you gave to our two initial phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to your staff and to the pupils for making me so welcome and to the chair of governors and local authority representative for making the time to come in to see me at such short notice.

As a result of its inspection in May 2006, the school was asked to improve teaching, develop better procedures for assessment and its use, and to increase the effectiveness of monitoring. Having considered carefully all the evidence presented by the school I am of the opinion that, at this time, the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

The school's records of checks on teaching indicate that the proportion of good teaching has improved significantly. My visits to all eight classes confirmed that the quality of teaching is satisfactory with aspects that are good. The school has put much effort into improving learning and teaching and has made satisfactory progress in this area.

Led by the energetic headteacher, a focus in planning and in lesson observations has been on what pupils learn. Through a range of methods, including in service training, teachers are being helped to tailor work and teaching styles to meet pupils' needs better. Staff have conducted lesson observations and have themselves observed teaching. Staff receive valuable written comments about the strengths in their teaching and points for

development. School and local authority staff have provided helpful support for teachers who have areas to improve. Teachers are clearly learning from each other and there is a good positive atmosphere in school towards change for the better.

Satisfactory progress has been made with improving the degree of challenge for pupils in lessons, but more needs to be done. In some lessons, the match of work to pupils' abilities does not receive enough attention and pupils can find the work too easy or too difficult. In these lessons teachers do not plan enough different starting points for pupils' work, matched to what they already know and can do.

The school has made satisfactory progress in improving systems for assessment. Teachers have a growing understanding of how well pupils are getting on in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Their understanding of pupils' progress over time and what pupils have understood or not in individual lessons has been an important factor in the improvement in their standards of work in the last year. The headteacher keeps detailed records of the pupils' progress and looks carefully at trends. This valuable work means that the school knows where to focus its energies, such as identifying when pupils need to revise specific areas of knowledge.

The school now has an effective system for tracking pupils' progress in the core subjects. It allows staff, for example, to check the progress of all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics and to set suitable targets for improvement. These targets are well known to pupils and they say that they help them to know what to do to get better.

Teachers group pupils accurately according to their abilities, but do not always ensure that the work each group has to do is pitched at the right level for each group in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

Satisfactory progress has been made in improving monitoring. The full attention of the senior management team has been focused on raising pupils' standards and improving their achievement in the core subjects. All staff share this commitment and the pace of improvement is growing.

Leadership and management are now satisfactory. Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science have made good progress with developing their skills of analysing pupils' performances and knowing why trends in their subjects are as they are. Subject leaders in these core subjects are rightly emphasising the need to concentrate on the quality of learning when completing lesson observations to help them accurately gauge the progress of different groups in classes.

Over the last year, under the well informed guidance of the headteacher and local authority, the school has made significant progress in improving its strategic planning. The action plans that guide the school's response to the issues for improvement, taken with the local authority's statement of action, are demanding but realistic. Governors have begun to make regular focused visits to see aspects of the school's work. They are gaining a clear understanding of improvements as they happen and fulfil their statutory responsibility to ensure an improving quality education for all pupils.

The pace of change has been satisfactory, staff have worked hard and the benefits of the improvements are clear. After the alterations, the school building is now a much better place to learn within. Most importantly, the school is embedding changes and is not trying to do too much at once.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Roger Fry
(Additional Inspector)