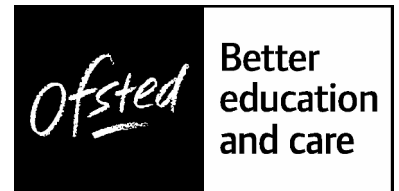


Tribal Group
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



13 March 2007

Mrs Pat Fuller and Mrs Gill Howell
The Acting Headteachers
St Catherine's Catholic Primary School
Highdown Drive
Littlehampton
West Sussex
BN17 6HL

Dear Mrs Fuller and Mrs Howell

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST CATHERINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 March 2007, 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 June 2006.

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

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting headteachers, other staff in positions of responsibility, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The school continues to be led by two temporary acting headteachers. One member of teaching staff has left the school and has been replaced and one teacher has changed class. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) joined at the start of this term on a temporary basis to cover the absence of the permanent post holder.

Achievement and standards

The standards reached by pupils remain below average but are rising. The school's most recent analysis of assessment data indicates pupils now make satisfactory progress in writing and mathematics. There are signs of improvement in reading and science. However, progress over time remains inadequate because actions to improve these areas were put in place later and have had less time to make an impact. The pupils are hampered by a legacy of weak basic literacy skills. Progress in lessons is satisfactory overall and sometimes good. The pupils are starting to build their learning securely because of better teaching and assessment and a more interesting curriculum. Whilst pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make overall progress in line with other pupils, those at the early stages of acquiring English do not always make enough progress in lessons.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science and improve pupils' achievement, taking swift and effective action when they do not make enough progress – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- improve attendance by taking firm action to discourage absences for holidays in term time – not inspected during this visit.

Quality of provision

Regular monitoring of planning and lessons by the acting headteachers and LA personnel is improving teaching and learning. They are now broadly satisfactory with growing good practice, especially in English and mathematics. Most lesson plans take appropriate account of pupils' prior learning and of the differing needs, although some describe tasks to be completed without clarifying what will be learnt. Lessons involve a satisfactory breadth of tasks with the best progress resulting from practical learning. This is especially motivational for the boys. Good management of behaviour and resources is a feature of most lessons. Teachers make increasingly effective use of interactive whiteboards, although the pupils do not use the boards enough themselves to enhance their learning. The extension of learning through questioning and discussion is a satisfactory element of lessons and are used by teachers in the best lessons to assess pupils' progress, although this is not consistent across the school. Whilst most pupils understand what to do in lessons, they do not always know how to judge the progress they are making because the criteria for success are unclear.

Good measures have been taken to tackle weaknesses in curriculum planning. Subjects such as science, history and geography now have effective long term plans, although this work is too recent to have made an impact on achievement.

Satisfactory progress has been made in improving assessment. The school has developed a suitable system for setting long term targets for pupils, tracking their progress, and identifying underachievement. Working with LA staff, accurate levels have been given to each pupil for reading and science, alongside those already given for mathematics and writing. Most pupils understand what they need to improve, but only Year 6 pupils know how their targets relate to National Curriculum levels. Teachers' capacity for accurate assessment is developing well, although inconsistencies remain. Marking has improved and is satisfactory. Some clear guidance for improvement is evident but the quality is variable, as are the expectations within different classes for how pupils will respond to marking.

The quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities continues to improve because of the expertise of the SENCO and because teachers are now more involved in reviewing pupils' progress and setting targets. The school works well with LA staff to improve provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language. However, in some lessons or parts of lessons, support for early stage learners of English is not good enough and these pupils are sometimes unclear about what to do or why.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- ensure that in all lessons the pace of learning is quick, that behaviour is managed consistently and that work builds on what pupils of differing abilities already know – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are improving but remain inadequate overall. The acting headteachers continue to provide good leadership. Leaders at other levels are increasingly effective but do not make a consistent contribution to school improvement. This factor, together with the temporary nature of the school's headship, means the school is not demonstrating an independent capacity to sustain long term improvement.

The acting headteachers are moving the school forward through judiciously introducing new initiatives, whilst capitalising on existing good practice. The impact is evident in better quality provision and achievement. Good efforts to involve the staff are made, for example, in re-writing policies in key areas such as marking and assessment. Appropriate steps have been taken to remedy most weaknesses in the development plan, for example prioritising

actions to raise standards in science. Nevertheless, in sections dealing with leadership and management, the definition of effective leadership and management is not clear enough to enable it to be measured.

The subject leaders for mathematics, English and science are making satisfactory progress in building their strategic roles, but are dependent on guidance from the acting headteachers and LA staff. The roles of the deputy headteacher and a member of staff with a teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) are underdeveloped. Procedures for performance management have been suitably tightened but job descriptions are not up to date, hindering clear accountability.

The acting headteachers monitor the school's progress accurately through a good cycle of lesson observation, work scrutiny, and analysis of assessment data. The outcomes are used well by them to target improvements. The involvement of other leaders in this work is at an early stage.

Staff development is rightly a high priority for the school and the acting headteachers manage this well. They also take effective measures to lessen the impact of changes in staffing, although parents are concerned about this and do not universally feel well informed about what is happening.

Governance has continued to improve and is satisfactory with areas of strength. The chair of governors provides a strong lead and challenges the school firmly over the progress being made. Other governors are now more effective, having had appropriate training in areas such as data analysis to enable them to better understand the school's performance.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- ensure that the school improvement plan has measurable targets that relate to pupils' progress, and make better use of monitoring information to improve teaching and learning – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide appropriate support focused increasingly on developing the school's capacity for autonomous improvement. Work to develop the school's provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is satisfactory but the impact made on everyday classroom provision is not monitored well enough.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the contribution of senior leaders such as the deputy headteacher and the TLR post holder to school improvement.
- Improve the consistency and quality of in-class support for early stage learners of English.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's and Young People's Services for West Sussex.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
H M Inspector