

Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Mrs D Wilson
The Headteacher
Yorkswood Primary School
Kingshurst Way
Birmingham
West Midlands
B37 6DF

28 February 2007

Dear Mrs Wilson

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF YORKSWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Charlotte Roberson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 February 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 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, deputy headteacher, other teachers, a governor, the inclusion manager, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring visit two teachers have left the school and two new teachers have been appointed. Two further teachers have been seconded to the school from elsewhere in the local authority.

Achievement and standards

The school assesses the attainment of every pupil in Years 1 to 6 each term in reading, writing and mathematics. The most recent assessments indicate that the majority of pupils made good progress in the autumn term in these subjects and the gap between what most pupils are capable of and what they are achieving is beginning to close. However, this improvement is not consistent across all subjects and throughout all year groups. There are still too many pupils who are not making as much progress as they could in reading and writing. The progress made by many pupils in reading in Year 5 and in writing in Years 4 and 5 is too slow. The school is aware of the underachievement in writing and is now putting actions in place to address this shortcoming.

The progress seen in lessons and in pupils' work during the inspection is also inconsistent. Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, with many making good progress in Year 2. However, in Years 3 to 5, progress is too slow for many pupils because pupils are given tasks which are either too easy or too hard or which are not suitable. Most children make very good progress in the Foundation Stage and good progress in Year 6, where work is well matched to the pupils' needs.

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

- raise standards of literacy – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are cheerful, friendly and polite. They enjoy school and like talking to visitors. They have a good sense of right and wrong and a developing awareness of how to keep healthy, fit and safe. The good behaviour seen at previous monitoring visits remains a positive feature. Within lessons pupils usually settle down quickly and try hard, although sometimes older pupils are over exuberant when responding to questions from teachers.

Procedures to record attendance are rigorous and follow legal requirements. The inclusion manager works very effectively with good support from the education welfare service to encourage all families to send their children to school every day and on time. Despite considerable effort on the part of the school, attendance has fallen since September and there has been a rise in the rate of unauthorised absence. However, attendance figures remain higher than at the time of the inspection in June 2005.

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

- raise the level of attendance by involving parents more constructively – satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching remains inconsistent. Although there have been improvements, for example in Key Stage 1, there is still too much teaching which is not good enough to enable the pupils to make as much progress as they could.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is outstanding and children get off to a flying start. Activities are well planned and well prepared, and resources are bright and imaginative. Adults and children all relate very well to each other. Teaching is purposeful and clearly focused on supporting pupils to gain independence and develop their personal and social skills.

In Key Stage 1, most pupils make at least satisfactory progress because lessons are well planned. Activities are varied and focused to ensure that the work pupils are doing is appropriate to meet their learning needs. In the best lessons, teachers use purposeful questioning well to develop pupils' understanding.

Although there is some good teaching in Key Stage 2, there is still too much teaching which is not good enough to enable all pupils to make as much progress as they could. Too many lessons are poorly planned and activities are not appropriate to enable pupils to learn what they are supposed to. In too many lessons, work is either too easy, so pupils are insufficiently challenged, or too hard. Resources are not always appropriate to meet the planned learning objective. Plenary sessions do not always involve pupils sufficiently and opportunities to consolidate learning are missed. As a result, pupils make little or no progress in these lessons.

The school has implemented a marking policy, but this is not followed consistently throughout the school. A few staff follow this policy well and provide helpful comments which show pupils what they need to do to improve. However, most of the pupils' work is not well marked. Comments are encouraging but provide insufficient guidance for the pupils. They rarely refer to learning objectives or expectations. On occasions, teachers' handwriting is poor and comments are grammatically incorrect.

Most pupils are set targets in English and mathematics. However, these targets are not used consistently well to enable pupils to move on in their learning. This is because they are not referred to enough and are not reviewed sufficiently frequently. The school is aware of this shortcoming and has plans to review the use of targets.

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

- raise the standard of teaching and learning all round – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The school's leaders and managers, including the governing body, have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is a good team spirit and all the staff are working together to improve the learning opportunities for the pupils. Good use is being made of the expertise within the school, as well as the considerable support from the LA, to provide help and advice where they are needed. A particular strength is the individual development that is taking place through the peer coaching that has been introduced throughout the school. This is providing a valuable opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own practice.

An appropriate range of staff are involved in the detailed programme of activities to monitor the work of the school. Most of these activities are now suitably focused, but reports are not sufficiently evaluative and do not always include sufficient clear and measurable development points to enable the school to move forward as quickly as it could. Feedback notes from lesson observations frequently lack clarity and sharp judgements. As a result, although several teachers have developed quickly, the progress made by a few has not been as rapid as it could have been. Consequently, the progress made by pupils is uneven throughout the school.

The school has implemented a detailed programme to assess pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics each term from Year 1 to Year 6. The resulting data is collated systematically and monitored thoroughly by senior staff and class teachers. This has enabled the school to target additional support accurately for those pupils who need it, as well as to highlight areas such as writing for whole school development. However, the school has not yet fully developed this tracking system to constantly challenge pupils and enable the school to hold all teachers to account for the progress made by each pupil.

External support

The continuing good quality support from the LA through their advisors and consultants is invaluable in helping the school to move forward.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make more rigorous use of the findings of self-evaluation activities to target support and raise the standard of teaching so that all pupils are enabled to make as much progress as they can in every lesson.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Solihull.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector