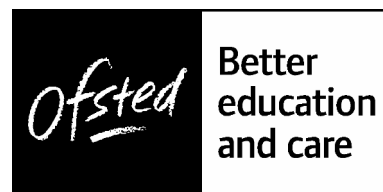


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Mrs Pat Perkins
The Headteacher
St Edmund's Catholic Primary School
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19 January 2007

Dear Mrs Perkins

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

Introduction

Following my visit with Sally Hall, Additional Inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 January 2007, 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 November 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 deputy headteacher, the coordinators for English and mathematics, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The current headteacher is on a fixed term contract for the remainder of this term and the deputy headteacher is on a fixed term contract until the end of the summer term. The governing body is currently in the process of recruiting a new headteacher and deputy headteacher as well as a part time teacher to coordinate the support for pupils with learning difficulties. Since the last

monitoring visit one additional teacher has been appointed on a fixed term contract.

Achievement and standards

The school has introduced a detailed system to assess the attainment of pupils throughout Years 1 to 6 each term and to track their progress. The resulting data indicates signs of improving progress for many pupils, but this is not consistent through all year groups. The majority of pupils in Years 2, 5 and 6 are making at least satisfactory progress in English and mathematics. In Years 3 and 4, where teaching has been disrupted through recent staff changes, the majority of pupils have made at least satisfactory progress in mathematics but progress in English has been slower with less than half the pupils making satisfactory progress. In Year 1 the majority of pupils have made inadequate progress in both English and mathematics.

The progress seen in lessons and in pupils' books is also inconsistent. The majority of pupils make at least satisfactory progress in Years 2 to 6, but far too many pupils underachieve in Year 1. Despite the improved rate of progress for some pupils, many pupils have not yet caught up and the standards reached by the majority of pupils in English in Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 and in mathematics in Year 1 are still not high enough.

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

- raise standards in Years 1 to 6 and remedy the weaknesses in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils of all backgrounds relate well to each other and to staff. They say that staff treat them fairly and appreciate that even when pupils have had problems staff are willing to regard 'tomorrow as a fresh start'. Pupils enjoy their time at school and appreciate the re-establishment of the school council, which gives a good opportunity for the older pupils to air their views. They are keen to improve the school environment.

Behaviour is at least satisfactory and often good around school. Most pupils behave well in lessons. However, in the minority of lessons where tasks are less stimulating, pupils quickly lose concentration and achieve little.

Quality of provision

Since the previous monitoring visit, the quality of teaching has improved for the majority of pupils, enabling them to make better progress. However, despite concerted efforts by the school and LA, pockets of weak teaching remain and a significant minority of pupils are still making insufficient progress. This is because teachers are not always clear about what they want

the pupils to achieve and do not plan effective activities which engage pupils in their own learning. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are frequently too low.

Where teaching has improved, teachers ensure that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and plan their lessons to suit the different needs and abilities of the pupils. For example, one teacher quickly engaged pupils in their learning with a sharply focused introduction to a literacy lesson, leading into a challenging group activity. Pupils were enthusiastic and made good progress. In the best lessons, teachers deploy their assistants effectively to guide pupils in their learning through carefully targeted questioning.

Through the new tracking system, the school now has a good understanding of the abilities of all of the pupils. Although teachers are beginning to use this information to plan appropriate group activities, it is not being used sufficiently well throughout the school to enable all pupils to make as much progress as they could.

Most pupils' work is marked carefully but the guidance given to pupils about how to improve their work is limited. Teachers give groups of pupils targets to work towards, but these are not referred to often enough in lessons or in teachers' comments in pupils' books. As a result, pupils are not always clear about the next steps in their learning.

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is limited by the lack of an appropriate covered outdoor area.

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

- improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6 – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Consistent leadership since the previous monitoring visit has enabled the school to focus sharply on its priority of improving teaching and raising standards. Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and appropriate actions have been taken to bring about improvements.

The coordinators for English and mathematics provide good leadership for their subjects. With appropriate support from the headteacher and professional advice from the LA, they are leading a range of initiatives to improve pupils' progress. For example, a focused approach to developing basic skills in mathematics through number clubs has begun to raise standards. The associated reward scheme has proved popular with the pupils. Standards in reading are improving as a result of staff training, the effective use of new resources and changes to the way reading is taught.

Initiatives are monitored rigorously through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, and regular assessments. The school's new tracking system to monitor pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 6 is detailed and makes sensible use of test data. It provides the school with robust evidence of where there is underachievement. Comprehensive support has been provided where it has been needed. However, this support has not always been sufficiently effective in bringing about improvements quickly enough. Although the progress made by many pupils is improving, there are still far too many pupils who are not making as much progress as they could.

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

- take a more rigorous approach to addressing areas of weakness – satisfactory.

External support

The school has continued to benefit from a good level of support from the LA. The support of consultants and advisors has been beneficial in developing the skills of senior leaders as well as providing targeted support for individual teachers. Further financial assistance has enabled the school to provide valuable additional classroom support for a class of pupils who have suffered disruption to their teaching.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Take urgent action to address the remaining areas of underachievement in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector