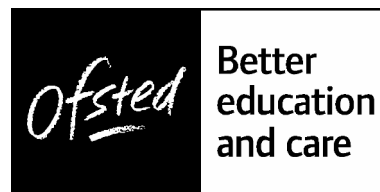


Tribal Group
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



16 March 2007

Mrs L Small
The Headteacher
Huntington Primary School
Stafford Road
Huntington
Cannock
Staffordshire
WS12 4PD

Dear Mrs Small

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HUNTINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Trish Walker, Additional Inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 March 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 March 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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with members of staff, the local authority and the governing body.

Context

Since the last visit a new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed. The deputy headteacher will start in post from the beginning of the summer term. In addition, there have been changes within the governing body but there are still two vacancies.

Achievement and standards

The progress that the majority of pupils make is now satisfactory. Children enter the school with standards below those expected for their age, especially in basic literacy and numeracy skills. Whilst they are still below by the end of the Reception Year, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching, achievement and provision throughout the Foundation Stage. The results of national tests in 2006 for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils demonstrate how progress has improved. Pupils gained broadly average results. This is a significant improvement on the last five years. The progress of Year 6 pupils from when they were in Year 2 also demonstrates good added value. It is realistically understood by the school that whilst this was commendable, much of the high level of progress was due to them having to catch up on so much in the interim.

In the Foundation Stage, standards still differ across the six early learning goals. For example, children have the expected levels of knowledge and understanding of the world but weaker skills in the areas of social and communication development. In addition, boys have low writing skills whilst girls reach the expected levels.

Through Years 1 and 2, pupils are now given more challenging work because teachers have raised their expectations about what their class is capable of achieving. Throughout the school, pupils are showing satisfactory levels of day to day progress, although there are still more pupils who could achieve levels above the average. The school is now rightly working on ensuring that pupils make continuous progress across a broad range of subjects from one year to the next. Nevertheless, there are signs that the initial success is beginning to be sustained over the longer term.

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

- raise achievement and standards in Years 1 and 2 by improving the quality of teaching and building on what pupils have learned in the Foundation Stage – good.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring visit in July 2006:

- to help better integrate the provision of the Nursery and Reception Years, review and share the planning and range of active learning experiences across the classes – good.

Personal development and well-being

As at the previous visits, pupils' personal development remains good. Pupils are well behaved and enjoy school. They are keen to talk about the work they are doing and say that they find their lessons more interesting. The

general atmosphere in classrooms continues to be calm and orderly. This allows all pupils to become engaged in their work without disruption. During whole class discussions, the pupils are very polite and listen to the contributions of others. Pupils are building their self esteem and social understanding through activities such as the weekly 'Captain's Table' at lunchtime. Teachers choose pupils who have made a significant improvement or contribution and they have lunch with the headteacher at a top table that has been laid out expertly by the pupils themselves. They are encouraged to use a knife and fork properly, serve meals, and are beginning to make healthy choices of food. Discussions with those involved indicate that they feel honoured to have been chosen.

A concerted effort is being made by the school to improve pupil punctuality and regular attendance. The education welfare officer and social services are working closely with the school to target a number of families and ensure that parents and carers understand the need to make sure their children are at school. However, attendance last half term was below the national average although it is still on line to reach the local authority target by the end of this year. There have been no exclusions since the last visit.

Quality of provision

Teaching has continued to improve since the last visit and, although there is still a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, it is now satisfactory overall. Significantly, a higher proportion of teaching is good, with a noticeable improvement in Years 1 and 2. There are also examples of outstanding teaching in the junior years which are providing good role models for others. Common strengths seen in the majority of lessons are the better focused planning and delivery of lessons, which centre round the individual needs of pupils. These are providing a higher degree of challenge for pupils. Marking, whilst improved, is somewhat variable. All books are marked regularly and good work is praised. However, it is not always clear what individual pupils need to do to improve and some pupils are not sure themselves.

The curriculum continues to fulfil statutory requirements and, as the basic skills in English, mathematics, technology and science have improved, so the school has looked to extending the coverage within other subjects. A recent addition is the development of French teaching. This is helping widen pupils' horizons but the school has yet to monitor the methods used to ensure that it is fully effective. The innovative use of sports coaches and other specialists is helping develop wider life skills. The Reception and Nursery classes have continued to become better integrated, which is helping to better prepare children for their future schooling. A new footpath helps link the two classes so there is less isolation. In addition, there are integrated activities where Nursery children have the opportunity to work alongside the Reception

children and the staff regularly meet together to discuss the strategies that they will use.

The pastoral care, guidance and support of pupils are good on a day to day basis. This includes training in child protection and safeguarding. However, written procedures and policies are not up to date. They have not been ratified by the governing body and do not comply with recent legislation. Pupils with learning difficulties are satisfactorily supported and their needs addressed. Good use is being made of outside agencies, for instance to support behavioural issues. Academic guidance has improved since the last visit. Whole school analysis of pupil performance is now more widely shared with individual teachers. This has raised their expectations and helped sharpen the quality of their planning. The analysis clearly relates to the levels of progress that have been made and questions are raised if this is not high enough. In this way, teachers are becoming accountable for the progress of their class.

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

- accelerate achievement and raise standards in English throughout the school by raising teachers' expectations, sharpening marking and assessment and using the information properly in planning – good.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring visit in July 2006

- to help better integrate the provision of the Nursery and Reception Years, review and share the planning and range of active learning experiences across the classes – good.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a realistic view of the school's current position and has continued a close scrutiny of its work. There is a rigorous programme of lesson observations, both by the headteacher and local authority. These are sharply focused on the findings of previous observations as well as those identified as whole school priorities. This stringent monitoring, along with explicit feedback both of the strengths and the areas for development, has had a positive impact on the delivery of lessons, planning and the use of assessment. As result, pupils of all abilities, and particularly those with learning difficulties, are being challenged to work harder.

Recent training of the governing body has given them an improved understanding of their responsibilities. However, the benefits of the training along with the legacy of uncertainty about their roles have not yet had any impact. This is partly because there have been changes of personnel and irregular attendance by some members which is hampering effective teamwork. In addition, minutes of meetings are unclear and are not giving the necessary information to help governors provide the support and

challenge about areas for improvement. To help, the school has recently appointed a new clerk who, along with the headteacher and local authority, is now undertaking a full review of systems, procedures and meetings. This is aimed at enabling the governing body to be more closely directed on its statutory obligations regarding policies and legislation, some of which are not fully compliant with national regulations.

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

- establish more rigorous systems for checking and improving teaching and learning, clarify what is being checked and why and take robust action to tackle weaknesses when they occur – good.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring visit in July 2006:

- identify and measure the effectiveness of the proposed staffing restructuring, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities – good
- provide governor training to ensure that they better understand the issues facing the school and can support and challenge the leadership team and make the school more accountable for its actions – inadequate.

External support

The quality of local authority support has continued to be good in helping to improve the quality of education for the pupils. A comprehensive range of training has been provided for governors but this needs to be strengthened to ensure that the governing body is able to meet its statutory responsibilities.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the governing body meets all its statutory obligations.

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

Yours sincerely

David Collard
Additional Inspector