

18 June 2007

Miss Dawn Cotter
Headteacher
Badock's Wood Primary School
Doncaster Road
Southmead
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Dear Miss Cotter

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BADOCK'S WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Charalambos Loizou, Additional Inspector to your school on 12 and 13 June 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 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 several subject co-ordinators, the teacher working with pupils learning English as an additional language, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been no significant changes in staffing since the last inspection. Since that time, however, several teachers, including some from the senior management team, have tendered their resignation and turnover at the end of term will be high. Some new appointments have been made and more remain to be done. Over the course of this year, the school has admitted fourteen pupils who are in the early stages of learning English and who speak nine different languages between them.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards in English and mathematics are improving and are edging closer to those expected nationally in Key Stage 2. Better teaching and improved systems for assessing attainment and tracking progress are helping most pupils to reach their targets. This is less evident in Key Stage 1 and the Foundation Stage.

Standards are still low in Key Stage 1 but they are improving. Pupils' progress is uneven and reflects inconsistencies in the teaching. Sharper evaluations and assessments have helped the leadership team to target support for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils continue to make satisfactory progress towards their targets.

Children in the Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress overall, although this varies across the key stage in line with the quality of teaching that they receive. The school has taken effective steps to sharpen assessment and planning to ensure that the staff in the Nursery and Reception classes monitor children's progress closely. This has yet to have an impact as standards are very low by the time the children start Year 1.

Standards are low in science and information and communication technology (ICT) because these subjects have not been priorities this year. Having concentrated on dealing with the legacy of underachievement in English and mathematics, the staff are now starting to tackle weaknesses in other areas of the curriculum, including ICT and science.

Personal development and well-being

Steady improvements in the pupils' attitudes and behaviour have continued. Teachers have become more skilled at managing behaviour with the result that poor behaviour rarely interferes with the learning of the whole class, although it still has an impact on some individuals. The school has taken effective steps to identify the reasons for the occasional unacceptable behaviour of a particularly challenging group of pupils in order to deal with it appropriately. The number of exclusions has reduced. The learning mentor has trained some older pupils to be 'peer mediators' and the scheme aims to help pupils themselves to resolve difficulties at break times. Those selected as mediators spoke about their responsibilities, albeit a little shyly, to pupils in a Key Stage 2 assembly. This work is increasing the opportunities pupils have to contribute positively to the life of the school.

Pupils are now more eager to get on with their work and their attitudes to learning are changing for the better. As teaching has improved, so have the pupils' attitudes. Pupils in the later years of the school, where unsatisfactory attitudes were entrenched, have begun to enjoy much of what they do. For example, pupils in one class worked in the adjacent woodlands for the whole of one afternoon during this

inspection. The prospect of this experience ensured that every pupil attended school. Nevertheless, the teachers have to work hard to keep the pupils engaged because they still switch off quickly when they are not interested and some give up totally when they meet with a challenge that they do not like. The social skills of some of the younger pupils are still not well developed and they sometimes find co-operative work difficult.

The school's sterling efforts to raise attendance levels continue. There have been remarkable successes with some families, but unfortunately their increased attendance has not made much of an impact on the overall figure, which is still too low. However, the trend is upwards and attendance this academic year is half a percentage point higher than it was last year.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005

- improve pupils' attendance at school – satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

During this monitoring inspection, only those teachers who will remain in the school next year were observed. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and there is a growing proportion of good teaching, which accounts for the better progress that pupils are making. Improvements to planning and assessment are helping teachers to focus on the needs of individual pupils. However, there is still more to be done to eliminate underachievement, particularly in parts of the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.

In the most effective lessons there is a close match between the tasks the pupils are asked to do and their previous learning. There is more challenge, a brisker pace and higher expectations. Less effective teaching is characterised by over-long whole class discussions and tasks that are not demanding enough of all pupils. This results in some restless behaviour that disrupts or slows the pace of learning. Teaching assistants give sound support to pupils who have learning difficulties and are used well to engage pupils who have emotional difficulties.

Improvements are being made to the curriculum. The recent initiative which involves working with outside agencies to promote outdoor learning has got off to a good start. Pupils have good opportunities to extend and enrich their learning in outdoor areas such as the adjacent woods and grassed areas around the school. The impact has yet to be evaluated but the early signs are that the range of activities offered is benefiting the pupils' personal development, attitudes and behaviour. Teachers are now devising interesting topics and themes that link subjects, for example, in science and English, where pupils learn to make scientific observations and record their findings in writing. The school has recently taken delivery of two sets of laptop computers to replace the redundant ICT suite. This should ensure that the school is able to teach the full range of the programmes of study for ICT.

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

- raise pupils' standards and achievement, especially in English and mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The headteacher is coming to the end of her first year in post. During this time, she has brought about positive changes and improvements in key areas of the school's work. Behaviour has improved, standards and achievement are better, particularly in Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching is more consistent and inadequate teaching has reduced. This is a significant achievement. The deputy headteacher has worked hard, with the support of the learning mentor and LA staff, to establish rigorous procedures for promoting attendance. He has also been instrumental in beginning the process of reviewing and developing the curriculum.

Throughout the year, the headteacher has had to shoulder a large burden of responsibility, for the strategic oversight of the school's work, for its day-to-day operation and for dealing with crises. This is because financial constraints meant that some posts which were vacant could not be filled and the deputy headteacher had to continue with his full-time teaching commitment. The forthcoming changes in staffing, while bringing some uncertainty, also give scope for the delegation of responsibilities and for innovation. A new staffing structure is about to be discussed by governors. It shows how leadership tasks will be more equitably and logically distributed and how teachers at senior and middle management levels will be responsible and accountable for important aspects of the school's work. Subject co-ordinators and one phase leader spoke with enthusiasm about their plans for the next academic year.

The new structure and several of the people within it are as yet unknown quantities. While the model has the potential to enable the school to move forward more quickly, its success must be judged on the impact it has on the outcomes for the pupils both in their learning and their personal development. At the moment, the school cannot clearly demonstrate that its capacity to improve is secure.

Governors meet regularly and give due consideration to the headteacher's detailed and thorough reports. The committee structure is working well, but not all committees have yet agreed their terms of reference.

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

- develop the school's capacity to improve by raising the quality of leadership and management at all levels – satisfactory progress

External support

The local authority has continued to provide support that is helping the school to tackle areas of weakness. The work of the consultant for the Intensifying Support

Programme has had a good impact on the teaching of writing and consequently the pupils' achievements. Support in other areas is appropriately tailored to need. For example, advanced skills teachers (ASTs) are working with individual teachers to help them improve their practice. Another AST is working with the nursery team to improve the quality of interventions in children's play to promote language development and there are signs that this work is having some success. The school's attached improvement officer has a good understanding of the challenges the school faces and plays an important part in helping the school evaluate its own effectiveness.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Priorities for further improvement

- make sure that pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 make good progress and eliminate underachievement
- demonstrate quickly that the new leadership team is making a difference to the quality of education.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
H M Inspector