

CfBT Inspection
Services
Suite 22
West Lancashire
Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct Tel: 01695 566930
Direct Fax: 01695 729320
lpitt@cftb.com



9 May 2007

Mrs C Sandford
Consultant Headteacher
Austhorpe Primary School
Austhorpe Lane
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS15 8TP

Dear Mrs Sandford

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF AUSTHORPE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Margot D'Arcy, Additional Inspector, to your school on 2 and 3 May 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 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 the headteacher and other staff, pupils, governors and a representative from Education Leeds.

Context

Since the inspection in December 2006, the headteacher has resigned and a consultant headteacher was seconded to the school in January 2007. A new administration manager also joined the staff at this time. The governing body has appointed a permanent headteacher to take up post in September 2007.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' standards have not risen since the inspection in December 2006. The many new measures introduced to develop teaching are improving pupils' progress in some lessons. However, these measures are new and their impact is not yet apparent in pupils' work throughout the school. Pupils in Year 6 continue to achieve well in lessons because high expectations encourage them to learn at a brisk pace. However, pupils' progress throughout the rest of the school remains inconsistent and many are still not achieving as well as they should. The pace and demands of learning are not consistently sufficient to ensure that pupils catch up the ground that many have lost over time. The school's own increasingly detailed assessment information indicates that current pupils are not yet performing at a better level overall than in the past.

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

- Improve standards and pupils' achievement from the Foundation Stage to Year 5 – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

The positive features noted at the inspection in 2006 have been maintained, with some improvements to pupils' behaviour. Attitudes to learning are improving but remain satisfactory overall. In some lessons, pupils comply in completing work but they show little enthusiasm. Relationships are good and pupils are welcoming the increasing opportunities to have more control over their learning.

Quality of provision

The school has concentrated much effort on introducing constructive strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A new common format for lesson plans clearly identifies learning intentions and success criteria. How work will be adapted to meet the range of needs in classes is also specified, as is the use of teaching assistants. Teachers note how well pupils have achieved in previous lessons and, in the best examples, identify those in need of more support or challenge. This improved planning is reducing the variability in teaching seen in the December 2006 inspection.

Pupils are clearer about what they are learning because learning intentions are shared with them. Although lesson plans usually identify work to meet the range of ability in classes, in practice this is not always precise enough. Sometimes the pace of learning dips when teachers talk for too long or labour points with the whole class that the more able pupils have already understood. This prevents planned work at the higher levels from being covered in the lesson time and results in some loss of attention by the more able pupils.

Teachers are beginning to increase their range of teaching methods, including providing more opportunities for pupils to discuss ideas with each other. Pupils have noticed these improvements and say that lessons are more enjoyable. However, they still find some lessons 'a bit boring', especially 'when teachers talk for too long and there is no practical work to do'. Teaching assistants are making better contributions to lessons, reinforcing key ideas to groups or individuals in whole-class sessions and supporting group work.

Improved teaching and curriculum planning in the Reception class have resulted in a better balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities. However, adults do not give children enough opportunities to talk about their work in review sessions at the end of lessons. More use is made of the outdoor area. Although the classroom has been organised better to reflect the areas of learning, planning does not make sufficient links between the areas of learning to guide staff. Consequently, some potentially good opportunities to extend learning are missed. Children have chances to plan aspects of their work. Teaching staff observe and record what happens but do not always interact enough with the children to teach them and take learning forward.

A new marking policy provides clear guidance on how teachers can identify pupils' strengths and guide them constructively on how to improve. Recently developed assessment systems are providing greater consistency of approach across the school and giving a clearer view of pupils' progress. However, the accuracy of assessments is still not secure. The school is aware of this and is implementing moderating procedures to ensure that the information provides a firm basis for planning work that correctly matches pupils' needs. Pupils are increasingly involved in assessing their learning. They have targets to aim for in literacy and numeracy, though not all are sure what these are.

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

- Increase the quantity of good teaching – satisfactory
- Develop consistent approaches to curricular planning and tracking pupils' progress so that provision meets the needs of all groups of pupils – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The consultant headteacher's own monitoring has quickly given her an accurate picture of the quality of teaching throughout the school. This has helped to establish an important start to making necessary improvements in provision. She has shown strong leadership that has improved staff morale; governors, staff, parents and

pupils all express confidence in her work. With her guidance, and support from Education Leeds, staff have established a clear action plan that adequately tackles all the areas of weakness identified in the report of December 2006. The initial main focus on improving teaching and learning through better assessment is appropriate and some positive outcomes are already apparent, but it is early days yet. All staff are making improvements to their practice through adopting agreed and consistent approaches to planning and marking. There is increasingly strong recognition of the importance of raising achievement and what needs to be done, resulting in a shared approach to improvement.

Team approaches are being further developed through the new senior leadership team, which has been established to oversee the school's work. This is giving key staff greater opportunities for discussion, evaluation of progress and involvement in decision making. Responsibilities are clearly established and all are keenly and enthusiastically carrying out their roles. A more rigorous approach to monitoring has given members of the senior team a sharper view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have analysed pupils' work, teachers' planning and the increasingly accurate assessment systems. These actions have given them a better understanding of how staff need to improve in order to ensure pupils' better progress. However, their opportunities for crucial direct lesson observations have been relatively limited as yet.

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

- Improve the leadership and management of the school to ensure that timely action is taken to secure improvements in the school's work and standards – satisfactory
- Establish a shared approach to monitoring the work of the school – satisfactory

External support

Education Leeds has set out a targeted approach to meeting the school's needs in its satisfactory statement of action. Support from consultants and advisers has been appropriately matched to the school's main priorities, with a view to the school's removal from special measures within two years. Some support, such as through the Primary Leadership Programme, is already having a positive impact. A comprehensive monitoring process has been established, including a 'joint review group' that involves governors and staff in evaluating progress and improvements.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure teachers raise the expectations they have of pupils, by making greater use of assessment information when they plan lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tony Painter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tony Painter
Additional Inspector