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13 July 2007

Ms S Machin
The Headteacher
King Charles Primary School
Wilkes Avenue
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West Midlands
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Dear Ms Machin

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of King Charles Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 July 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 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

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with staff, governors, parents, consultant and advisory staff from Education Walsall.

Context

Staff turnover has continued since my previous visit, with two permanent teaching staff leaving at Easter. However, the good partnership with Bentley West Primary school has allowed the earlier than planned deployment of an experienced teacher into Year 4/5 for three days per week, and this teacher will continue full time at King Charles next term. Temporary experienced staff are currently teaching in the Nursery. The separate governing bodies of Bentley West Primary and King Charles Primary have agreed to a federation of the two schools, which is scheduled to occur from September 2007 under one newly constituted governing body.

Achievement and standards

Evidence from the school at this visit shows encouraging signs of improvement in standards in some year groups. The school now has clear and regular assessment data that shows the standards reached and progress made, compared to that expected, for every pupil in every class. In general, standards remain below average, but satisfactory progress is evident in the Foundation Stage. There is good progress in Year 1 and reasonable progress in Year 2. There is satisfactory progress in most of Key Stage 2, except Year 5, where too many pupils are still not attaining their expected levels. The focus on improving spelling is now apparent in explicit correction and pupil practice in books, but there remains a shortfall in writing standards when compared with reading.

Early analysis of the 2007 national assessment tasks shows standards to be slightly higher in Key Stage 1 than in 2006, with more pupils getting higher levels than previously. In Key Stage 2, overall standards are higher than in 2006, with more pupils gaining the expected Level 4 than previously in science and mathematics. They remain lower than last year's national averages. When coupled with the clear evidence of improvement in pupils' day to day work throughout the school, the recent achievement of most pupils is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

The general behaviour of pupils is satisfactory. An assembly was one example of good communal behaviour, as pupils observed and participated enthusiastically and respectfully, as required. The legacy of weaker teaching remains evident in some classes, requiring skilled application of the school's behaviour policy to maintain good order. Attendance figures are well below the national average. Pupils in lessons showed good concentration and enthusiasm when teaching provided a wide variety of activity and challenge.

Quality of provision

There is good evidence of regular monitoring of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work carried out by leaders and subject coordinators. The judgements based on this evidence show that teaching quality is now satisfactory amongst the current staff complement. In good lessons, pupils work at a good pace and make good progress because activities are varied, with short, time limited tasks pitched at appropriately demanding levels. All lessons have good basic planning. Good training and coaching by an Education Walsall consultant and lead teacher staff and Bentley West Primary teaching staff are training middle managers in lesson observation skills very well.

My own observations showed all lessons I saw during my visit to be at least satisfactory, with several good lessons. This, in conjunction with robust school and Education Walsall evidence, represents a significant improvement in teaching quality since the previous monitoring visit. The quality of marking and assessment is in

many cases very good and, where this is being consistently applied, pupils are now making good progress. Clear level descriptors, and an indication of the extent to which learners have mastered particular skills or demonstrated required knowledge, are stuck into pupils' workbooks for easy reference and updating. The school is now much more aware of what constitutes good assessment practice, and is striving towards ensuring consistency.

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

- raise standards and accelerate the rate of pupils' progress by using time more effectively, raising teachers' expectations and ensuring that guidance for pupils, including marking, is more precise – satisfactory.

The curriculum was not a focus of this visit.

Care, guidance and support was not a focus of this visit.

Leadership and management

There is now a clear and determined focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning that is shared amongst all staff. The thoroughness of current lesson observation, work scrutiny and data tracking is good. Judgements based on this evidence are accurate. The work of external supporting staff has helped to establish common planning, marking and lesson expectations. The sharing of pupil progress data between staff has helped raise awareness of what pupils can do, and also what they should be able to do. The consistency of good marking and assessment, and pace and variety of activity in lessons, is improving. However, the continuing changeover of some teaching posts has compromised the ability of the school to improve consistency.

The school improvement plan now has many clearly measurable performance criteria that will make judging the effectiveness of initiatives much easier. There is a good separation of personnel between those delivering and monitoring a development strand and those evaluating its impact. The plan does not always make it clear why particular activities are needed.

Governors have good information from the school and Education Walsall monitoring visits.

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

- with the full involvement of senior managers and coordinators, implement rigorous monitoring and evaluation that focuses clearly on pupils' learning in lessons and their progress over time – satisfactory.

External support

There has been good support by Education Walsall and the partnership with Bentley West Primary school. Lead teachers, strategy consultants, senior advisers, and the consultant headteacher are now working together well with the school to create a common sense of purpose and deliver manageable steps towards better teaching. This has created a positive spirit of collaboration and willingness to improve at all levels in the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed before consultation with the monitoring HMI.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the managing director of Education Walsall and the Director for Children's Services for Walsall.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Cartwright". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Brian Cartwright
H M Inspector