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12 July 2007

Mr Freeth
Westminster CE Primary School
Westminster Road
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD3 0HW

Dear Mr Freeth

Collaborative Fresh Start: Monitoring Inspection of Westminster C of E
Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit with Angela Headon HMI and Ron Bulman, Additional Inspector to your school on 10 and 11 July 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 opened in September 2005.

This letter will be published 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 and assistant headteacher who comprise the senior leadership team. Discussions were held with representatives of Education Bradford and with the chair and vice chair of governors. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and informally to other pupils and members of staff.

Context

The number of pupils who attend school has remained stable with 332 on roll. Two part-time teaching assistants have left and another part-time teaching assistant has been appointed. A member of the teaching staff is currently absent from school and until very recently her class was taught by a supply teacher. The class is now taught by the assistant headteacher who has recently been appointed to this role; she was previously a member of the senior leadership team as an advanced skills teacher.

Another member of staff is due to leave school at the end of this term; a new appointment has been made that will take effect from September 2007.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain lower than they should be throughout school but they are beginning to improve. This is seen in the 2007 Year 2 teacher assessments and in the recently received unvalidated Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science where results are higher than they were last year. The reason for this improvement is because teaching and learning are getting better. The school's data indicate that many pupils are now making better progress than they were. However, improvement by those pupils who should attain at the higher levels remains an issue for the school that needs to be addressed. Also, there are still pockets of underachievement, notably in Year 5 and for minority groups of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2. Pupils who have English as a second language, however, or who are new to English and those pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities now achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils enjoy school. They respond enthusiastically, for example, at lunchtime, to the adults who look after them and organise activities such as rounders and sack races. Inspectors could see that adults and pupils were having a lot of fun! More opportunities are provided for pupils to widen the range of their experiences through trips and excursions. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils visited the Great Yorkshire Show and nursery children went to Ilkley. People have commented on the pupils' good behaviour when out of school and this is something that is evident at all times during the school day. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They are usually keen to make useful if brief contributions to group and whole-class discussions. They consider issues such as healthy eating and how it impacts on others who might be of a different faith or culture to themselves. In this church school, the pupils' spiritual development is well founded on principles that encompass the various faiths represented by the school's community and the pupils who attend.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are showing signs of improvement. Focused support that includes whole-school and individual training for teachers has taken place and is beginning to make a difference. For example, bespoke training to improve teachers' expertise to provide for pupils with English as an additional language or who are new to English, has initiated strategies such as 'collaborative partners' and this has been received positively. Where there is good teaching, the impact is evident. For example, in the nursery the quality of teaching is consistently good and reflects the well-planned provision across all the areas of learning. In Year 6, pupils have benefited from some good subject teaching in English and mathematics. Unvalidated results of the 2007 national tests exemplify the improved progress made by these pupils. However, the level of challenge for pupils in lessons is still not as demanding

as it should be or consistently applied throughout school. For example, teachers do not routinely challenge more able pupils with tasks that enable them to develop their thinking so they can solve more complex tasks or problems. Inadequate teaching has decreased and the amount of good teaching has improved; however, the pace of change in teaching within school is still not as fast as it needs to be.

Underachievement in school remains, although this is beginning to be addressed as pupils make better progress in lessons. Underachievement has been more carefully identified by the assistant headteacher through extensive tracking of pupils' progress and analysis of data. Teacher assessments that support the data are becoming more reliable, although some inaccuracy in respect to the higher levels has been identified within Key Stage 1. Nonetheless, the systems developed are a significant improvement within school and have aided the identification of the type of intervention that is needed. Further changes in respect to the intervention provided are planned for September 2007 when a new teacher is to join the school and the setting arrangements that are currently in place are to change.

The school continues to develop its creative curriculum to cover all subjects with the exception of English, mathematics and science. Lessons for the creative curriculum and science are in the afternoon and teachers and pupils report that this approach is an improvement on previous practice and that lessons are enjoyed. Coverage of the subjects for each year group is checked by the deputy headteacher. However, pupils' skills in science, religious education and all other subjects, with the exception of mathematics and English, have yet to be tracked. This is planned to be linked with the development of the coordinators for these subjects.

Significant steps have been taken to improve provision for the high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Education Bradford has made a substantial contribution in the form of consultancy, training and help with monitoring of teaching and learning. As a result, staff awareness of the issues and available strategies has increased. Lesson planning sheets have been amended to give greater priority to the needs of those with English as an additional language or who are new to English. The support now offered ranges from spontaneous translation to small group intervention in the basics of reading and writing.

Teachers have recently evaluated the impact of the improved strategies used. They have analysed and used school assessment data to monitor the individual and relative progress of pupils. Some remarkable progress has been noted among a small, targeted group of relative newcomers. Records are starting to show that; overall, the achievement of such pupils is at least in line with their peers and sometimes better. The school recognises that, while this new focus is already yielding positive results, these are still early days. Evaluation is already leading to further improvements and refinements. For example, the successful recruitment and deployment of skilled teaching assistants has paved the way for further developing this use of valuable staff.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in March 2007:

- Improve the consistency of good and better teaching through the effective challenge of all pupils to achieve their best – satisfactory progress
- For those pupils who have English as an additional language, ensure that provision to meet their needs is well focused and consistent throughout school – good progress

Leadership and management

The school's senior leaders are beginning to work more strategically as a team and this has brought about improvement since the last monitoring visit. For example, the effective and well understood pupil tracking systems introduced by the assistant headteacher have ensured that pupils' underachievement is identified, monitored and addressed with targeted support and intervention. These actions, together with the half-termly pupil progress meetings that prioritise achievement have clearly helped all staff focus on the key areas for improvement. Work also continues to develop the role of subject coordinators. The coordinators for English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT) are now more confident than they were. As a result, they are beginning to support the work of the senior leadership team more effectively. Although improvements have been made, further work to develop coordinators' expertise is required, particularly in science and ICT so that pupils' skills in these subjects, and across the whole curriculum, can be tracked effectively. Senior leaders are aware of the work required to sustain the recent improvement in pupils' achievement and this is now accurately identified in school development planning. The governing body is also showing signs of improvement and is becoming more effective in their challenge as well as their support of the school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in March 2007:

- Ensure that leadership and management develop rigorous, effective and independent strategies to monitor and evaluate the work of the school so that standards are raised – satisfactory progress

External support

The school purchases external support from consultants in addition to the very high level of both support and challenge that it receives from Education Bradford (EB). The school improvement officer and a range of consultants from EB regularly visit the school to offer training and support and this is helping leaders in school to focus more sharply on the areas for improvement. The outcome of their work is evident in that it has helped to arrest the overall inadequate progress that was previously seen.

Main Judgements

The school's overall progress - satisfactory

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the improved progress of all groups of pupils where underachievement has been identified.
- Sustain the consistency of good and better teaching and ensure that planned tasks and activities in lessons challenge all pupils effectively.
- Develop all leaders and managers to be effective in both their individual and collective roles.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Strategic Director – Services to Children and Young People and the Managing Director of Education Bradford.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Linley
H M Inspector